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PROGRAM ACCOMMODATIONS MADE BY  
NEW JERSEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LIBRARIANS  
TO MEET THE NEEDS OF EXCEPTIONAL READERS

by  
Beverly S. Siti

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
Master of Arts Degree  
of  
The Graduate School  
at  
Rowan University  
(May 2, 2000)

Approved by

Date Approved May 13, 2000

## **ABSTRACT**

Beverly S. Siti. Program Accommodations Made by New Jersey Elementary School Librarians to Meet the Needs of Exceptional Readers. 2000. (Under the direction of Dr. Holly G. Willett, Program in School and Public Librarianship).

As teacher and educational partner, the elementary school library media specialist must accommodate the diverse abilities and interests of students in all stages and degrees of literacy development. In order to examine if and how school librarians in New Jersey meet the needs of students who read either above or below grade level expectations, a survey was designed to measure key attributes of a library program that successfully accommodates all readers: the librarian's background knowledge of the reading process, his/her collaboration with others who have knowledge of students' strengths and needs, the accessibility of appropriate materials to students within the library, and reading guidance and instructional methods employed. The self-administered survey was distributed proportionately throughout New Jersey's 21 counties to 156 randomly selected elementary school librarians; the response rate was 60%. A descriptive analysis of the data, presented in both narrative and table formats, was based on the percentage of librarians using each recommended practice or technique. Study results show that New Jersey's school librarians are knowledgeable of the reading process and are actively involved in meeting the needs of exceptional readers in their library programs, although gifted readers may not receive as much direct intervention as remedial readers.

### **MINI-ABSTRACT**

Beverly S. Siti. Program Accommodations Made by New Jersey Elementary School Librarians to Meet the Needs of Exceptional Readers. 2000. (Under the direction of Dr. Holly G. Willett, Program in School and Public Librarianship).

New Jersey elementary school library media specialists were surveyed in order to assess their efforts in meeting the needs of remedial and/or gifted readers in the library program. Conclusions stress the need for additional endeavors to be made in instructional modifications and readers' guidance, particularly for the gifted reader.

## **Acknowledgements**

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*This thesis is dedicated in loving memory to  
Chester T. Siti*

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## **Chapter One**

### **Statement of the Problem**

#### **Introduction**

As a new century approaches, educators are faced with the responsibility of helping students attain the skills they need to become effective users of information. As *Information Power* (1998) points out in its guidelines for school media centers, it is essential for school librarians to form a partnership with other members of the learning community in order to facilitate this process. As they attempt to encourage children to choose reading as a tool for self-directed learning and/or recreational pursuit, they perform a function that “begins with promoting and reinforcing students’ interests and abilities in reading, listening, and viewing.”

The Commission on Reading stated in its 1984 report, *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, that independent reading is one of the most important activities for the literacy development of all students. Research has found that independent reading contributes significantly to a student’s vocabulary growth, reading fluency, and comprehension, while also providing him/her with a wide range of background knowledge. The Commission recommended that schools create an “ethos that supports reading” in order to ensure that all students gain the level of literacy achievement vital to meeting the challenges of the future. As background for its recommendations, the Commission conducted an analysis of schools that successfully promoted independent reading. Important features of these successful programs included ready access to books, activities to interest students in books, and guidance in choosing books from someone who knew both the books and the students.



Helping children choose to read for any of a variety of purposes is tantamount to creating lifelong readers and learners. The job is not made easier by current trends in education which focus on heterogeneous classroom grouping, multiage/multilevel classrooms, cooperative learning, and mainstreaming of special needs students. The task falls to the librarian, as teacher, to observe students and collaborate with classroom and reading teachers in order to develop an awareness of student learning styles and capabilities. In turn, he/she can then devise appropriate instructional strategies and evaluative techniques as well as provide appropriate accessibility to library resources and guidance in their selection to all students.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Librarians have long been associated with promoting literacy and motivating their patrons to discover the joys of reading. This role takes on new meaning for school librarians whose young patrons are in the various stages of learning to read. In all likelihood, the students will be achieving various degrees of success in this learning process, thus presenting the librarian with a diverse population ranging from nonreaders to skilled readers. Between the opposing ends of this spectrum are beginning readers, remedial readers, reluctant readers, and advanced readers. Inherent within this array of reading abilities comes an equal mixture of attitudes toward reading.

One of the primary roles assumed by a school librarian within the learning community is that of teacher. The art of teaching is contingent upon an understanding of the learning process and of the specific disciplines to be taught (Vandergrift, 1994). Therefore, in order to meet student needs, the school librarian should have some grasp of the reading process as well as insight into his/her students' reading abilities and interests. Armed with this knowledge, the librarian can begin to successfully match children with books and other informational resources.

The effectiveness of a school library program that does not truly accommodate the diverse abilities and interests of its students can be called into question. In spite of the best intentions on the part of the librarian, however, this accommodation may not be occurring. The typical school librarian has numerous constraints on his/her time which do not allow for much collaboration with teachers or observation of individual students; daily operational responsibilities within the library, fixed schedules, multiple sites, large student populations, and other school-related duties are just a few of these demands. In addition, school librarians may or may not have classroom teaching experience, and their college preparation may not have included a framework for the psychology of learning or literacy development.

### **Purpose of the Research**

The research described in this thesis attempted to explore the issue of library program accommodations in one particular geographical locale. It sought to determine if, and to what degree, adaptations are currently being made by New Jersey school librarians to meet the needs of exceptional readers, those children whose reading abilities place them outside the realm of the “average” reader. In addition, the research examined the possible need for further preparation in the subject of reading on the part of librarians-in-training from the perspective of those already actively working in the field.

The subjects of the proposed research were a random sampling of school librarians currently working in elementary public school programs throughout the state of New Jersey. The subjects were drawn from urban, suburban, and rural communities.

New Jersey was chosen as the geographical location of this research for several reasons. The first was personal interest; the researcher is a product of the New Jersey public school system and received undergraduate and graduate training there in the fields of education and school librarianship. The research was conducted as part of this graduate education in library science at Rowan University. Considering the large number of school

librarians in the South Jersey area who are Rowan graduates, the research was carried out on a statewide level in order to analyze a sampling of librarians coming from a broader spectrum of library education programs.

It is hoped that the results of this study may be of value to new librarians as they begin to establish their own instructional programs. They may also provide experienced librarians with reinforcement and acknowledgment of their own practices or suggestions for additional program accommodations.

### **Literature Review**

A brief review of the literature on the research topic reveals insights into the characteristics of exceptional readers and offers tested methods for meeting their needs within the school library program.

One out of seven people in the United States, or 15% of the population, have learning disabilities, and 80% of these disabilities involve reading difficulties (Gorman, 1999b). In a school setting, these are the children who experience problems in reading that have not been helped by traditional instructional approaches. Without support, these students may not have access to the information needed to become proficient lifelong learners (Block, 1997). While the school librarian cannot act as diagnostician, he/she can make the library a more accessible place for students with reading disabilities.

In need of a different kind of support from the school librarian are the children who are gifted readers. These children generally demonstrate advanced reading skills and tend to value the art of reading (Beswick, 1969). They often read widely, quickly, and intensely, revealing high levels of vocabulary, abstract thinking, and strong comprehension of the nuances of language (Council for Exceptional Children & ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children, 1990; Clendining & Davies, 1980). Gifted readers also need access to a wide variety of materials and library activities that will challenge them.

The most frequent suggestion in the literature for meeting student needs within the school library is providing an abundance of materials on a variety of topics and written on all reading levels. Chambers (1983, p. 75) points out that successfully selecting books for children requires two kinds of knowledge: “intimate knowledge of the books available, and intimate knowledge of the children to whom we are introducing the books.” Resources should also be made available in various formats and tailored to meet students’ individual needs (Gorman, 1999).

In addition to providing a strong collection, librarians may need to adapt their instructional techniques in order to help exceptional readers become active users of the library. The difference between instruction for gifted readers and instruction for less accomplished readers is a matter of degree. For both groups, expectations need to be adjusted, and pacing and content tailored to meet their interests and abilities (O’Donnell & Wood, 1999). Gorman (1999) recommends direct, specific instruction, with information broken down into small units of understanding for remedial readers. The librarian should model new processes or strategies, and students should be offered a wide variety of options for sharing what they have learned. Gifted readers, on the other hand, need to be directed to suitable reading materials, and their library experiences need to be as varied and challenging as possible (Beswick, 1969).

### **Theoretical Framework of the Study**

The underpinnings of this study lie in the learning theories behind literacy development. Research at the Northeast Regional Laboratory, the Kentucky Department of Education, and the Standards and Assessment Development and Implementation Council of the State of Colorado produced a literacy continuum which identifies the sets of behaviors that characterize students at different levels of learning to read. The five levels of the continuum are:

- Emergent reading - The student begins to realize that print has meaning.
- Reading word-by-word - The majority of the student's attention is placed on decoding and encoding, and only occasional comprehension occurs.
- Reading with interrupted meaning - The student is able to establish, but has trouble maintaining, the meaning and purpose of what's read.
- Reading proficiency - The student can present a fully developed, focused response to a reading.
- Reflective, expert reading - The student has mastered control of decoding and literal/inferential/applied comprehension, and develops ideas with insight and perception. (Block, 1997)

There are many factors which may impact a child's progress towards literacy.

Physical conditions such as neurological, visual, auditory, and kinesthetic-tactile differences can play a significant role in a child's reading development. Cognitive differences can arise relative to a child's gender, schema (pictures and associations the brain creates whenever the child hears or reads words and sentences), and preferred modality for learning. Psychological and emotional attributes can affect a child's self-concept and, consequently, his/her motivation to read. Environmental and educational factors, too, can place a child at an advantage or disadvantage (Bond, Tinker, Wasson, & Wasson, 1984).

An average school population will contain students at both ends of the literacy continuum as well as at all points in between. While traditional, developmental reading instruction is implemented in the classroom, the students' skills, interests, and independence in reading can be extended through their exposure to and guidance with the variety of resources within the library. Therefore, school librarians, as partners in the educational process, need to be knowledgeable of the developmental stages of learning to read, the behaviors exhibited by children at each stage, and the other contributing

factors. They may then apply this knowledge to their work with both students and teachers and, as a result, give all students the chance to succeed.

### **Questions to be Answered**

This study was based on the assumption that school librarians are in tune with student needs, and the research was designed to determine the overall effectiveness of the New Jersey elementary school librarian in meeting the needs of the exceptional reader. This effectiveness is dependent on the librarian's background knowledge and preparation as a teacher as well as the program modifications he/she has made to allow for the wide range of student reading abilities. Observations on the part of the researcher and the results of the formal research by others in the field have indicated acceptable practices for meeting student needs. These practices, then, formed the variables of this study, and their measurement was assessed through a survey which addressed the following questions:

- Do school librarians feel their knowledge of the reading process is adequate for responding to the diversity of reading levels they deal with in each class of children or do they feel additional training in this field would be helpful?
- Do school librarians have the opportunity to communicate with classroom and reading teachers about student needs or do they depend on their own observations and interactions with students for this information?
- Are appropriate materials available for both remedial and gifted readers?
- Are students allowed accessibility to all books in the library or are there restrictions placed on their book selections?
- Which methods do librarians employ in helping students select books that will be appropriate for their reading level/needs?
- What accommodations are made during skills instruction to ensure that all students can participate and show evidence of what they've learned?

The survey method allowed for the collection of data from a population too large to observe directly. Subjects were chosen through a systematic sampling procedure. The survey consisted of both open- and closed-ended questions. Questions about actual practices called for a time-related response (example: often, sometimes, rarely). Effectiveness was measured by comparing the percentages of librarians who employ techniques either suggested in the literature or of their own making on a regular basis against the percentage of librarians who do not vary their programs to meet the needs of individual students.

Data was collected through the use of a self-administered survey. The survey was mailed out to the selected research subjects along with a letter of explanation and a stamped, self-addressed envelope for its return. Completed questionnaires were opened immediately, and a recording made of the rates of return. A follow-up mailing was necessary to prompt further returns.

The collected data was analyzed for the purpose of drawing conclusions about the role school librarians play in meeting the needs of exceptional readers. The analysis process pursued a descriptive route based on the percentage of librarians using each recommended practice or technique. Explanatory analysis followed with an emphasis on the librarian's educational preparation and opportunities for collaboration with other faculty.

### **Limitations and Delimitations of the Study**

The research was limited by the number of completed surveys received and the accuracy and honesty of the answers. Since a survey is a self-administered questionnaire, the possibility exists that respondents chose answers that make them look more effective than they truly are.

A delimitation of this study is that it does not reflect the national status of school librarians and their methods of reaching students of various reading abilities. The analysis does, however, offer some insights into practices within the state of New Jersey.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following definitions are given for terms which are used throughout this thesis:

Elementary school. Since the definition of an elementary school differs from one school district to another, elementary schools identified in this study will encompass grades PreKindergarten through eight.

Exceptional reader. An exceptional reader is defined as a student whose reading abilities place him/her either above or below the average reader at his/her particular grade level.

Gifted reader. A student who has mastered basic reading skills at an early age and whose reading instruction is focused on higher cognitive level comprehension skills and creative thinking is considered a gifted reader.

Reading. Reading is the process of giving the significance intended by the writer to the graphic symbols by relating them to one's own fund of experience (Dechant, 1970).

Remedial reader. A remedial reader is a student who needs special supports to realize full value from, and joy in, literacy (Block, 1997).

School Librarian. The school librarian is defined as the professional within a school building who holds primary responsibility for the organization and daily operation of the library. This person may : 1) have a library science degree, 2) have associate or educational media specialist certification, 3) be working towards a degree or certification in library science, or 4) have no formal training in library science. Throughout this study, the terms school librarian, librarian, and school library media specialist will be used synonymously.



### **Organization of the Remainder of the Study**

This study consists of five chapters. The current chapter has introduced the topic under study and offered a rationale for the pursuit of the research. Chapter Two provides an in-depth review of the literature and addresses what experts in the fields of reading and librarianship have to say about exceptional readers. Chapter Three delves into the methodology employed in the research. It is here that the design of the study and the specific procedures used in the collection of data are outlined. Chapter Four presents the data that was collected during the study in both narrative and graphic form and gives a descriptive and explanatory analysis of it. The fifth and final chapter summarizes the research results, states the conclusions the researcher has drawn from those results, and offers recommendations for further study.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Review of the Literature**

#### **An Historical Perspective on Literacy Instruction**

The purpose of literacy instruction, as the teaching of reading has come to be called in recent years, is to produce individuals who can listen, speak, read, write, and think in critical, imaginative ways (Manzo, 1993). This educational process has evolved since the Middle Ages, with the criteria for functional literacy continuously changing as civilization has advanced. Reading instruction in colonial America was seen as a necessary step for spiritual salvation. Upon earning independence from England, our country's founding fathers viewed reading as a way to develop students' moral character and create national unity among the colonies. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, literacy was advocated as a way to promote a more law-abiding citizenry (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1998).

With the arrival of the Industrial Age in the United States, however, the ability to read began to assume a new importance. As society became increasingly complex and sophisticated, more and more information was systematically created and preserved, and the demand for literacy accelerated. Reading, therefore, became the instrument an individual needed in order to master the information required for him/her to function intelligently and effectively within society (Shuman, 1987). Modern levels of technological sophistication continue to create spiraling demands for even higher levels of literacy both now and in the future.

## **Identification of Exceptional Readers**

Most children in any given classroom have similar, though not identical, literacy needs. They are considered developmental learners and are able to learn to read without any adjustments in the reading program (Rude & Oehlkers, 1984). There will also be those children whose abilities are so divergent from those of their classmates that they need special attention. They may learn more quickly or more slowly. They may or may not respond to typical instructional approaches. Their ability to concentrate on a task and work independently may vary widely in degree. Both remedial and gifted readers fit this category of divergent learners, and a search of the literature provides identifying characteristics for each.

It is estimated that 15% of the US population have learning disabilities, and 60-80% of these people have reading disabilities (Gorman, 1997). Bruininks, Glaman, and Clark (1973) stated that teachers may expect between 8 and 15% of the average school population to have reading problems, with up to 28% of the students reading below grade level. These are the children who have not been helped by traditional instructional approaches. Without support, these students may not have access to the information needed to become lifelong learners (Block, 1997).

While remedial readers were once primarily identified by reading test scores which fell below criterion levels based on IQ and grade level, today they are more often defined by how they approach reading and what they get from the actual process. While doing research on remedial reading, Johnston and Allington (1991) assembled a list of some of the behaviors that are typical of remedial readers:

- Remedial readers tend to be unreflective and usually do not self-monitor or self-correct.
- Remedial readers are less positive about reading and writing.
- Remedial readers are less likely to actively construct meaning and see patterns in reading and writing.

- Remedial readers are less persistent when faced with frustrating text.
- Remedial readers are far less strategic or flexible in the way they read.
- Remedial readers tend to have low self-esteem, reflected in a tendency to make negative statements about themselves while performing tasks.
- Remedial readers often lack the ability to self-select books for individual reading.

The student who lacks confidence in his/her ability to read will often avoid reading, particularly longer books. He/she will identify any situation that involves reading as threatening. This attitude is self-defeating in that it often results in the student's failure to practice the skills he/she has already acquired, and, through disuse, his/her reading ability may actually regress.

Estimations of a typical school's gifted population range between 10 and 15% (Council for Exceptional Children & ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children, 1990). Many of these gifted children tend to be gifted readers as well, reading at levels far beyond the rest of their classmates. These children tend to be intelligent, intuitive learners. They generally have extensive vocabularies and use language in creative, innovative ways. Their advanced language ability is usually a reflection of their cognitive ability. Gifted readers may exhibit any or all of the following characteristics:

- Gifted readers have usually mastered basic reading skills by the time they enter school and are ready for complex concepts at an early age.
- Gifted readers tend to have an internal locus of control. They believe that achievement is the result of their own ability and behavior (Collins & Aiex, 1995).
- Gifted readers are highly perceptive, discerning relationships quickly and making logical associations.
- Gifted readers are capable of high-level reasoning and logical thinking. They solve problems efficiently - sometimes in unconventional ways.

- Gifted readers are more likely than others to think things through, applying reflection and foresight while pursuing meanings.
- Gifted readers exhibit a high degree of intellectual curiosity and tend to value the art of reading. (Eads, 1971)

While gifted readers are usually omnivorous consumers of books, and there are no problems in actually getting them to read, some caution must still be given in regards to these students. It must be remembered that a child's intellectual age does not always match his/her emotional development. Therefore, any instructional program designed with the gifted reader in mind should include materials and strategies based on the child's present needs and demands (Collins & Aiex, 1995).

### **The Role of the School Librarian in Literacy Development**

The educational goal of creating skilled readers is critically tied to the school librarian's goal of promoting information literacy; reading is a key element to finding and using information. It appears, therefore, that the school librarian plays a valuable role in this curricular area. Lea-Ruth Wilkens, oft-quoted author on the topic of reading instruction in the school library, explains that a school librarian "must have a sound understanding of the reading instruction process" in order "to guide readers on how to use the wealth of printed materials available to them in the school library media center (1984, p. vii)."

Support of the school library program by other voices in the fields of literacy development and instruction for the gifted is revealed in the following quotes:

The school library or media center plays an important part in the total reading program. Although the teacher develops the child's reading skills by means of the formal program of instruction in the classroom, it is through the school library or media center that the child's interests in reading are pursued and expanded.

(Bond, Tinker, Wasson, & Wasson, 1984, p. 94)

The extent to which a successful library program will substantially improve the total reading program cannot be overestimated. Children who can choose from a wide range of carefully selected books, and who receive instruction in library and reference skills from a trained teacher-librarian, are like to become more interested and capable readers. (Austin & Morrison, 1963, p. 232)

School librarians are the obvious mentors to nurture gifted readers. (Abilock, 1999, p. 32)

When teachers join librarians in fostering a community of readers at the classroom and school level, all students have the foundation for a lifetime of reading. (Hiebert, Mervar, & Person, 1990, p. 758)

The instructional time that library media specialists spend with students is a significant part of their literacy education. (Myers, 1990, p. 190)

As the purpose of the proposed research was to determine if and how the special needs of exceptional readers are being met within the school library program, a literature search was made to see if previous studies along these lines had been conducted.

Although the literature contained many references to a connection between reading instruction and the school library program, the majority of information found tended to be of a descriptive nature; it offered suggestions for collaboration techniques with faculty, tips on collection development for remedial and gifted readers, ideas for providing reading guidance, instructional strategies, and other library program considerations.

Only one study (Pettit, 1992) was found that related indirectly to the research at hand. It sought to determine how public libraries serve reluctant readers in the state of Ohio. The author of this study defined reluctant readers as those reading two or more levels below their grade level, and this coincides to a degree with the definition of remedial readers presented in the current study. From survey responses, the researcher concluded that the reluctant reader was often not being served adequately in most small to mid-sized libraries in Ohio. Limited and varied efforts were being made to help these students, and

the need for further education and training for library staff was identified. While Pettit's study was conducted with public libraries, the same findings could easily apply to school libraries as well if school library media specialists lack either the necessary knowledge, resources, or time to work with students with divergent reading skills.

### **Librarian-Teacher Collaboration**

Collaboration is an essential component of the school librarian's role in promoting literacy. Ideally, he/she works with other faculty members to plan, conduct, and evaluate effective learning activities for all students (American Association of School Librarians & Association for Educational Communications and Technology, 1998). The librarian may assist with material selection and searches, adapting instructional materials, designing instructional activities, team teaching, and working with small groups or individual students as they come to the library. These tasks assume even greater importance when considered in relation to exceptional readers.

The school librarian is in the unique position of seeing students in a nonclassroom setting on a regular basis. As a result of his/her observations and insights, the librarian can make useful contributions to any discussions in which the educational needs of an individual student are being assessed. He/she can also gain information from these discussions that would enable him/her to address a student's needs or teach to the student's strengths in the library setting (Swartz & Levine, 1999; Wetherell, 1991).

The need for a good working relationship between the librarian and other teachers is also recognized by Dales (1990). She states that while their approaches may be different, both teachers and librarians strive to help students explore new ideas, be creative with language, and become competent readers, writers, listeners, and speakers. If both recognize each other as team-teachers, the librarian can truly belong to the "schoolwide reading-writing community," working side-by-side to meet the needs of developmental and exceptional readers.

Montgomery (1987) found commonalities between the definitions of library media literacy and reading. She states that both definitions:

- deal with symbols in either a print or nonprint format.
- require meaning to be drawn from those symbols.
- infer that it is an active process.
- imply that thinking and comprehension are necessary components.

She went on to examine the skills involved in reading and library media literacy, and again found similarities. As a result of these comparisons, Montgomery concluded that the school librarian already has at his/her fingertips many of the methods and strategies needed to best teach these skills, thus establishing the basis for librarians and reading teachers to plan joint instruction.

The school librarian is described as a “natural” reading teacher by Lea-Ruth Wilkens (1983), and she feels that librarians must put forth the effort to become part of the school’s reading decision-making team. This entails responsibilities such as inclusion on curriculum and textbook selection committees, helping to measure and evaluate students’ reading achievement and/or attitudes, and sharing their expertise as master teachers through planned workshops or presentations for the teaching staff. Wilkens states that frequent, open communication between the librarian, classroom teachers, and reading specialists will enable the librarian to be of greatest service to exceptional readers, whether it be in the selection of appropriate materials, reading guidance given, accessibility offered, or the adaptation of instruction.

### **Collection Development for Exceptional Readers**

One of the primary responsibilities of a school librarian is trying to ensure that all students have the resources they need to prepare them to live and work in an information society. The school library media collection needs to be as responsive to the varied interests and ability levels of the students who use it as it is to the demands of the



curriculum. An effective collection development plan will rely on open communication between the librarian, classroom teachers, and students in order to ensure that appropriate materials are available to meet all needs.

The library collection should include materials that will accommodate class, group, and individual instruction. Exceptional readers need materials in a variety of formats that will allow for differentiated instruction and individualized access to information. Reference books, specialized indexes, nonfiction books, fiction books, picture books, periodicals, newspapers, audiotapes, videos, games, realia, computer programs, CD-ROMs, database networks, and multimedia kits must be tailored to meet the needs of students with different reading levels, background knowledge, and interests (Jay & Jay, 1991).

The more a child reads, the better reader he/she will become. Therefore, when making selections for remedial readers, the librarian should provide a wide assortment of materials written on a variety of reading levels in order to allow each child the opportunity to read comfortably and for enjoyment as well as for learning purposes. Low vocabulary level/high interest materials are necessary for students with reading problems (Bond, Tinker, Wasson, & Wasson, 1984). In the lower grades, it is recommended that such books have a simple plot, easy sentence structure, a lot of action, and attractive illustrations. For the older student, the book should meet his/her interests, have a format that does not give the impression of being for younger students, and have an easy vocabulary and simple sentence structure (Cleary, 1972). Multimedia formats on current curriculum topics, including items such as videos, audiotapes, and CD-ROMs, should also be provided in order to reach all learning styles and modalities (Gorman, 1999b).

As with remedial readers, collection materials for gifted readers need to mesh with student abilities and interests. The materials must be appropriate in quantity, quality, breadth, depth, variety, format, and maturity (Peterson, 1966). All genres of fiction and nonfiction must be represented so that interdisciplinary study may be encouraged. A large

proportion of the materials need to be imaginatively and intellectually stimulating and challenging for these readers, and higher level books (sometimes even at adult level) should be available (Beswick, 1969). Since gifted readers have the capacity for focused, sustained effort, longer books may be considered (Beers & Samuels, 1998).

Language is the key component to be considered in selecting materials for gifted readers since books that use varied and complex language structures are a primary source of cognitive growth (Collins & Aies, 1995). Materials rich in language will expose gifted readers to such thought-provoking attributes as “language patterns from other eras and cultures, literary and historic allusions, symbols, sophisticated vocabulary and powerful imagery” (Baskins, 1998, p. 70).

Since gifted readers are characteristically independent learners, easy accessibility to reference materials is also important for them. Authoritative atlases, encyclopedias, dictionaries, journals, magazines, and newspapers should be available along with Internet connections. A media-rich environment, including print and nonprint formats, will ensure the gifted reader the opportunities he/she needs to satisfy his/her intellectual curiosity.

### **Reading Guidance**

Every school librarian’s ambition is to foster a love of reading within children, and he/she sets about doing this in numerous ways. The librarian sets out to create a warm, welcoming environment in the library which will draw students in and provide them with ready access to reading materials of all kinds. He/she serves as a model to students by reading to them and with them, and promotes books and reading as positive, worthwhile activities for learning or leisuretime pursuits.

Research has shown the importance of having an adult who is knowledgeable about books and children assist students as they make book selections (Anderson, Higgins, & Wurster, 1985). Children tend to view the school librarian as someone with vast knowledge of books - a good source of information and advice who is neutral with respect

to the process (Gold, Greengrass, & Kulleseid, 1992). Other studies have shown that librarians are frequently identified by students as the source for their selections in contexts where book selection occurs primarily in the library (Hiebert, Mervar, & Person, 1990). While librarians routinely offer reading guidance to all students through both formal and informal methods such as booktalks, displays, and casual one-on-one conversations, this assistance is even more imperative for exceptional readers.

Recreational reading is essential to reinforcing a child's decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension skills; as stated earlier, a child becomes a better reader by reading. Providing access to reading materials is a critical motivator of voluntary reading on the part of a child, and allowing the child to choose his/her own books is also a relevant component (Palmer, Codling, & Gambrell, 1996; Worth, 1996). The benefits of reading, however, can only be realized if a child selects a book he/she can easily read. If a remedial reader makes an inappropriate selection too often or finds that choosing is too difficult or time-consuming, the final result may be a child who gives up on reading altogether.

The literature offers multiple ways that reading guidance may be given to remedial readers. It suggests that direct instruction and specific guidance for groups or individuals may be necessary to help children internalize the choice-making process.

One of the most frequently cited methods of helping a child determine whether a book is too difficult for him/her to read is the "How to Pick a Book by Hand" approach. The child is directed to choose a book of interest and open it to any page. He/she should start to read at the top of the page and hold up a finger for each unknown word encountered. If four fingers and the thumb are held up before the child has finished reading the page, the book is probably too hard, and he/she should choose a different book (Castle, 1994).

Ohlhausen and Jepsen (1992) offer the Goldilocks Strategy wherein children are encouraged to ask a given set of questions in order to differentiate between books that are "too easy," "too hard," and "just right." The three categories of books coordinate with

the independent (too easy), instructional (just right), and frustration (too hard) levels traditionally used in assessing students' reading abilities. The authors suggest that it is important for students to understand that all readers become involved with books that fit all three categories and that they be given the opportunity to explain to others how and why they made their choices. The Goldilocks Strategy can be modified (e.g. a name change) so that it is appropriate to use with any grade or ability level.

A third direct, instructional approach in helping teach children how to successfully choose books was developed by Ollman (1993), and is appropriate for use with remedial readers of middle school age and beyond. Using the format of a dialectical journal, students record clues about a potential book choice on a seven-step strategy sheet. The clues are based on the book's title, the illustrations, the author, the book jacket summary, the first page, a page one-third into the book, and a page two-thirds into the book. The student then uses this data to make predictions about the content, style, and interest of the book. After using the strategy sheet two or three times, the author found that students had internalized the process and were able to follow the steps mentally when selecting a book.

Reading guidance for remedial readers may also be done less formally. If a student is particularly interested in a book that is beyond his/her reading level, he/she may be encouraged to read it with a partner. In this way, the book can be read either to or along with the student. The partner may be another student, a teacher, or even a parent (Castle, 1994).

The librarian can regularly read aloud books that are within the comfort range of remedial readers. Books read aloud by teachers and librarians take on stature and importance. Books read by class leaders that can also be read by poorer readers can be commented on, thus using peer influence as a motivator. And, lastly, stories in short books may be featured, reinforced, and given status since booklength is often a deterrent to poor readers (Anderson, Higgins, & Worster, 1985).

It is a common misconception that gifted readers need no special attention because of their capability levels. However, without instruction and guidance, these children may lose motivation to read or learn, with the end result being that their achievement falls far below their potential (O'Donnell & Wood, 1999). The gifted reader needs assistance in directing their intellectual abilities in order to work towards a thorough, effective use of materials rather than mere quantity of reading (Batchleor, 1966).

The independent learning skills of gifted readers should not be left to chance. The librarian has the unique opportunity to help these children acquire library and research skills and can offer guidance in learning the tools needed to access and evaluate information from a multitude of resources. The gifted reader should also be introduced to selection aids that will enhance his/her search for reading material to fulfill personal or academic interests (Baskins, 1998).

Another false assumption made about gifted readers is that they will automatically seek out good authors. Here again, the librarian can play an important role in introducing gifted readers to good literature. This guidance can take place informally or in a structured setting, and should include the classics, exposure to the work of contemporary writers, and an introduction to sources of biographical information about authors. If a gifted reader has a particular genre he especially enjoys, the librarian can assist in helping him/her find exemplary examples of that genre (Flack, 1986).

One additional area related to guidance offered to gifted readers relates directly to the child him/herself. While intellectually advanced, gifted readers may lack commensurate emotional maturity, and personal issues may sometimes arise as a result of their special abilities. In such cases, these children may seek solace in books that fall below their reading level but deal with age-related issues they find important (Baskins, 1998). The perceptive librarian will be aware that children seek out books for a multitude of reasons, and offer the appropriate assistance to each child.

## **Instructional Strategies**

It may be necessary for the school librarian to adapt literacy instruction in the library to meet the needs of exceptional readers. Whether dealing with remedial or gifted readers, the structure of the lesson and student responses to it should reflect the librarian's knowledge of their respective needs. It may be necessary to move away from traditional worksheets and offer students alternative methods for demonstrating the knowledge they've attained (O'Donnell & Wood, 1999).

Gorman (1999a) suggests that the basic approach for working with children with reading disabilities is to present information in as many ways as possible. Visuals or sound may be needed to help some students understand concepts, so the librarian should attempt a multisensory teaching approach in order to accommodate these variations in student learning styles. Students can explore literacy in a variety of ways utilizing the library's technological capabilities. Multimedia materials such as CD-ROMs can provide meaningful learning opportunities to remedial readers (Myers, 1990).

Just as the video of a story or book might appeal to a strong visual learner, audiobooks or tapes are extremely effective tools that allow remedial readers to enjoy books above their actual reading level. Children in the early stages of learning to read learn about books, print conventions, vocabulary, story structure, and decoding from hearing books read aloud or on tape. Older readers increase their decoding and comprehension skills from hearing text read aloud and also benefit from hearing the plot structures, themes, and vocabulary of books they might find too difficult to read on their own (Beers, 1998).

A more technological way for a reader to connect sound with text is through a computer via the use of a sound card and voice synthesizer. The addition of a scanner will make print accessible to the student as well (Gorman, 1999a).

Students with reading problems may often have difficulty processing information. The librarian should speak clearly and present information or give directions in small units

in order to ensure understanding. New processes or strategies should be modeled by the librarian as he/she thinks the process through “out loud” for the benefit of the students. Individual help or guidance is important wherein the librarian actually shows the student how to perform a task rather than relying on oral directions.

Differentiated instruction in the library may be accomplished through grouping students heterogeneously. This allows students of all abilities to work with and learn from each other. The more capable reader as well as the poor reader can gain from the exchange of ideas, points of view, and information within his/her group (Jay & Jay, 1991).

In general, gifted readers become adept at using reading strategies at a much quicker pace than their peers. Their literacy instruction, therefore, should be differentiated, allowing them the opportunity to participate in enrichment activities in which they explore in greater depth a topic or genre of literature in which they are interested (O'Donnell & Wood, 1999).

The library is the ideal site for promoting intellectual growth through books. Reading guidance and book discussions led by the librarian can help customize the student's reading program. The focus of instruction can center on themes and ideas in the literature read as well as linguistic or structural features, and the gifted reader can be guided in sharing ideas verbally in depth, pursuing and integrating new ideas, hypothesizing and/or generalizing about story events, and building evaluative and analytical skills (Baskins, 1998; Halsted, 1990).

Creative reading can also be encouraged in the learning context of the library. This process requires the reader to go beyond the text by reorganizing the author's ideas or using those ideas to create something new (Smith & Robinson, 1980). When students read creatively they identify unsolved problems, gaps in knowledge, and missing information using both inductive and deductive reasoning (Dooley, 1993).

While gifted readers tend to read voraciously, possess good vocabularies, and generally have a broad background knowledge base, they are not automatically efficient

library users. The school librarian is in an excellent position, working in cooperation with classroom teachers, to teach and foster the use of independent library and research skills so that these students will be able to participate in self-directed learning and self-selected inquiry (Reis & Renzulli, 1992).

### **Library Program Considerations**

The literature review also gave a few suggestions that did not fit neatly into any of the previous categories. They are relevant, however, to meeting the needs of exceptional readers and so are included here.

The first suggestion is that all students should be free to select any library book regardless of grade or ability level. Geographic segregation of books should be eliminated or minimized (Anderson, Higgins, & Wurster, 1985). When libraries utilize this practice, children are often not permitted or are too embarrassed to “cross the line.” In either case, a child is being restricted from choosing a book in which he/she is interested and might read.

Manzo and Manzo (1990) advocate the development of a “living library” which involves the active participation of its users and encourages students to read, write, and think in more literate, constructive ways. They suggest several ways of increasing library appeal for all readers:

**WeWriters** - This is a section of the library designed to house stories, plays, essays, poetry, books, and other literary endeavors written by students, faculty, and members of the community. Desktop publishing systems can be utilized to help print these works, and they may then be bound and cataloged for circulation as part of the library’s regular collection.

**Inquiry books** - Used to stimulate curiosity, inquiry books are created by inviting students, teachers, and community members to submit index cards with interesting questions for which they have discovered or desire answers. The precise book and page



number where the answer can be found is added to the card, and books of questions can be placed in locations around the library. Students may be encouraged to browse through the books and attempt to locate answers to questions of their own liking.

Exchange Reading System - This program offers a means for better readers to share their thoughts with each other and with less capable readers. After reading a book, students are invited to write either a summary or critical annotation. These are edited and stored in a file box under the title of the book or selection to which it is a response or reaction. Other students are then free to use the annotations as selection guides to help with their own reading choices. They may then write their own annotation or respond to the one that is on file.

One additional recourse a librarian has to help exceptional readers is to build and maintain a professional library of up-to-date materials on the topics of reading disabilities and gifted readers for use by teachers, parents, and possibly even older students. Materials such as books, catalogs, web sites, and pamphlets can provide information on identifying or assessing reading differences, review beneficial books and computer hardware/software for use with these children, and offer practical strategies for working with and assisting them both at home and at school (Gorman, 1990b; Swartz & Levine, 1999).

## **Conclusions**

This literature review focused primarily on the areas of librarianship, remedial reading, and gifted readers. It clearly revealed that there has long been an awareness of the role the school librarian can and should play in helping develop students' literacy skills. Through collaborative efforts with classroom and reading teachers and armed with background knowledge of the reading process and the multitude of resources within the library itself, the librarian should be able to plan and implement lessons and provide guidance that will meet the needs of all students no matter what their reading ability.

The researcher believes that the study at hand was justified by the literature review. Article after article offered suggestions on what the school librarian can do to help exceptional readers. Many of those suggestions were used in a survey distributed to a random sampling of librarians in order to determine the reality of the situation on a local level. Do elementary school librarians in the state of New Jersey have the knowledge, resources, and time to meet the extra demands of poor and gifted readers, and, if so, to what extent? The findings of the research can be used by librarians, leaders in library education programs, and researchers interested in further studies to help determine the success of the school library program to meet the needs of students with divergent reading abilities.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

The ability to read is an important, if not essential skill for a successful, productive existence; the individual is confronted with the written word in just about every aspect of daily human life. With the arrival of a text-based Information Age, reading assumes an even greater relevance. While some technology enthusiasts predict the imminent demise of books, the explosion of data readily available at the click of a mouse demands the same aptitude for deciphering and giving meaning to the written symbols which comprise our language that books demand.

As would be expected, a major goal of the educational system in this country is to help students become competent readers. Heavy emphasis is placed on reading instruction, particularly in the elementary grades, and various methods and approaches, including phonics-based, literature-based, skills-oriented, and whole language programs, are debated and implemented. The outcomes are varied and, in combination with a variety of other factors, result in students whose reading abilities cover a wide spectrum of proficiency.

In order to prepare young people for the future, a school's educational team, including the library media specialist, faces the challenge of helping all students, no matter how poor or advanced their reading skills, learn to access, comprehend, evaluate, and apply information. As a teacher, the librarian needs to be aware of students' reading capabilities in order to offer them appropriate instruction and assistance that will fulfill their particular educational needs. In addition, the librarian has the opportunity to offer guidance that will allow students to find suitable materials they might read for pleasure or

independent study, which, from an educational perspective, has the added benefit of reinforcing their reading skills.

This thesis was designed, therefore, to address how elementary school librarians in the state of New Jersey work with those students who read either above or below grade level expectations. Librarians were asked to consider several factors identified by the researcher as being related to working with exceptional readers. These included availability and accessibility of appropriate materials, instructional methods and techniques, readers' guidance, collaboration with other school personnel, and each librarian's personal background knowledge of the reading process.

An analysis of the librarians' responses was made to determine how, and to what extent, library programs are being adapted to help all students become successful procurers of information and, hopefully, lifelong readers. Conclusions were also drawn as to whether school library media specialists feel they received adequate training for teaching and working with students who display a diversity of reading levels, and whether additional coursework in the area of reading instruction should be added to school library degree and certification programs.

## **Methodology**

Data for this research was collected through the use of a self-administered questionnaire (see Appendix). Surveys were mailed to 156 elementary school library media specialists selected randomly from New Jersey's 21 counties. A survey was used as the method of inquiry in this study due to the number of school librarians to be questioned, the large area the study encompassed, the number of questions to be answered, and the time involved in conducting individual interviews.

As a research approach, surveys are an effective means of collecting data when the population from whom information is needed is too large and too disperse for individual contact (Babbie, 1990, 1998; Backstrom & Hursh-Cesar, 1981). The flexibility of a

survey allows for many questions to be asked on the topic at hand, and the information obtained allows for descriptive, exploratory, and explanatory analyses of the responses (Babbie, 1990; Babbie, 1998).

Included in the mailing was a letter of explanation, the survey, a name/address form for indicating interest in receiving a summary of the research results, a bookmark given as a token of gratitude for the time and effort given by the respondent in the completion of the survey, and a self-addressed, stamped envelope for the survey's return. A follow-up mailing was sent after two weeks to nonrespondents.

### **Design of the Study**

The problem identified as the subject of this thesis focused on the school library media specialist's role in understanding and accommodating the diverse reading abilities and interests of his/her student patrons. Of particular interest to the researcher is how the needs of exceptional readers are being met. Possible restrictions on the librarian might be system-imposed, such as fixed schedules or multiple work sites, or related to the librarian's training and/or experience. An exploratory design of research was developed in order to investigate the problem for the purpose of searching out and closely scrutinizing the issues involved in order to obtain a clearer understanding of them (Birch & Mauch, 1998).

After exploring the literature for effective techniques and instructional methods for helping both remedial and gifted readers in the library setting, these techniques and methods became the variables of the study. The researcher then created an instrument designed to question those most closely connected to the problem, the school librarians themselves. Questions were composed that would encourage the librarians to reflect on their individual programs. Their answers revealed if and how they respond to student needs and also provided a general description of library practices throughout the state. Additional survey questions pertaining to each librarian's perceptions of his/her

background training offered information that collaborated the existence or nonexistence of program accommodations and, thereby, provided explanatory support.

### **Sample and Population**

A sampling of 156 elementary school library media specialists currently working in the state of New Jersey was surveyed. All 21 counties of the state were included: Atlantic, Bergen, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Essex, Gloucester, Hudson, Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris, Ocean, Passaic, Salem, Somerset, Sussex, Union, and Warren. By surveying librarians throughout the state, the researcher hoped to reach a sampling of professionals who had attended a variety of higher education institutions for their library training.

The researcher began by determining that costs allowed for approximately 150 surveys to be disseminated. Since the square mileage, population, number of schools, and school populations vary widely from county to county, the researcher sought to distribute the surveys equitably. Using the *New Jersey Department of Education's School Directory*, the number of school districts in the state was determined to be 616. The number of districts within each county was then used to calculate its percentage of districts within the state. From this number, the researcher determined the rate, or number of surveys, to be sent per county by multiplying the percentage by 150.

Once the number of surveys per county was determined, a Random Numbers Table (Babbie, 1998, pp. A32-A33) was used on the Schools/Media Centers section of the *Official Directory of New Jersey Libraries and Media Centers* (Sprance, 1999) to select the names and school addresses of elementary library media specialists.

Only elementary schools were considered in this study due to the concentrated emphasis on reading instruction in these grades. The definition of elementary school differs from district to district. For the purposes of this study, elementary school is considered to be PreKindergarten through grade eight.

Table 3-1

Distribution of Surveys by County

County	#Sch Dists	%Sch Dists	#Surveys
Atlantic	26	4%	6
Bergen	78	13	20
Burlington	42	7	11
Camden	43	7	11
Cape May	19	3	5
Cumberland	16	3	5
Essex	23	4	6
Gloucester	29	5	8
Hudson	13	2	3
Hunterdon	31	5	8
Mercer	11	2	3
Middlesex	26	5	8
Monmouth	56	9	14
Morris	41	6	9
Ocean	30	5	8
Passaic	21	3	5
Salem	15	2	3
Somerset	21	3	5
Sussex	27	4	6
Union	23	4	6
Warren	25	4	6

Note. #Sch Dists = Number of school districts within county. %Sch Dists = Percentage of county's school districts in relation to state total of 616.

**Instrumentation**

Using Babbie's *The Practice of Social Research* (1998) and *Survey Research Methods* (1990) as guides, a self-administered survey questionnaire (see Appendix) was constructed in order to obtain information from the participating school library media specialists. The layout of the survey provided an uncluttered appearance with ample white space. Clear instructions were supplied for getting appropriate responses. In order to motivate participants to answer, the survey questions were short, precise, unambiguous,

and relevant to most respondents. The survey was printed on both sides of two sheets of standard (8" x 11") business paper.

Before mailing, a draft of the survey was pretested among a group of teachers and school and public librarians who were not part of the study. Changes were made based on suggestions made by the thesis advisor and those who pretested the survey. In addition, the envelope provided for the survey's return was coded on the inside in order to identify those librarians who returned surveys and those who needed reminders sent to them.

The research variables were addressed in eighteen questions, including both open- and close-ended questions. All questions provided space for comments to be made and, where appropriate, included an "other" category for respondents to further explain an answer not suggested by the researcher. The first twelve questions asked the participant to make a selection by placing a checkmark in the box of all applicable answers. The remaining six questions required open-ended responses.

The first two questions on the survey were related to the actual identification of exceptional readers within the library program and the degree of collaboration (often, sometimes, rarely) the librarian has with other school personnel in determining student reading needs and strengths.

The accessibility of materials within the library itself was the focus of the next three questions, with an emphasis on shelving and student use of signage and the catalog.

The sixth question offered a variety of ways in which instruction might be adjusted for students of diverse abilities and allowed for respondents to suggest other methods they might use. The respondents were asked to check off the degree of regularity (often, sometimes, rarely) with which they employ each technique.

Questions seven through eleven dealt with the inclusion of library materials suitable for exceptional readers, maintenance of a professional library that includes information on reading disabilities and gifted readers, and the types of reading guidance offered to students. The question on guidance offered respondents a list of recommended



approaches from the literature and provided space for them to list additional techniques. The librarians were asked to check the frequency use level (often, sometimes, rarely) of all methods they employ.

The final questions on the survey were open-ended queries regarding the respondent's background knowledge of the reading process as well as his/her opinion on the need for a course in reading instruction as part of a degree or certification program in school librarianship. Each respondent was also asked for personal data including the number of libraries he/she is responsible for, the grade levels taught in the library, years of experience as a school librarian, and years of experience, if any, as a classroom teacher.

A cover letter (see Appendix) printed on official university letterhead accompanied the survey. The letter explained the purpose of the survey, gave basic instructions for completing and returning the survey, and stressed the importance of a prompt response. Survey recipients were told they need not respond to all questions in the survey and that the data gathered would be anonymous and confidential.

### **Data Collection**

The surveys were sent via first class mail to the 156 randomly chosen school library media specialists on Saturday, February 19, 2000. Participants were asked to respond by Friday, March 3, 2000.

A tally sheet was kept by the researcher indicating the dates the survey questionnaires are returned. This information was used to determine a pattern in the response rate. The coding on the inside of the return envelope allowed the researcher to determine the respondents who returned the survey and those who did not. Follow-up reminders were sent to thank all participants and to encourage additional responses. Additional surveys were distributed upon request.

A database coding system was used to record each respondent's answers as the returned survey was received. The database contained a field for each question asked,

enabling the researcher to plot answers quickly and efficiently. The information from the database was used to create a tally spreadsheet for the purposes of data analysis and the creation of tables.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

The collected data from close-ended questions on the survey was coded and tabulated in order to create comparative analysis tables reflecting the results. Responses from open-ended questions were collated. Since the variety of possible answers from these questions was great, the researcher attempted to categorize responses in order to code that information as well (Viladas, 1982). All data was analyzed, and generalizations were developed from it. The interpretations made, the comparisons observed, and the conclusions drawn are discussed in detail, in both narrative and table formats, in the final two chapters of this thesis.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Presentation and Analysis of Data**

#### **Introduction**

Surveys were sent to 156 elementary school library media specialists throughout the state of New Jersey to determine whether remedial and/or gifted readers are included in the populations they serve, and, if so, how they, as librarians, strive to meet the diverse abilities and needs of those students. Distribution of the surveys to library media specialists in each of the twenty-one counties was based on the percentage of each county's school districts in relation to the state total. Survey responses were analyzed in terms of key components, as described in the literature, of a library program that successfully accommodates all readers: the librarian's background and experience in the subject of reading, the degree of his/her collaboration with other school personnel in determining students' reading strengths/needs, the accessibility of appropriate materials to students within the library, and the reading guidance methods and instructional techniques employed by the library media specialist.

#### **Survey Response Rate**

The 156 surveys were mailed to the randomly selected library media specialists on February 19, 2000, with a requested return date of March 3, 2000. A reminder letter and additional copies of the survey were mailed on March 4, 2000. A total of 98 surveys was received, and 90 were usable for a net response rate of 60%. Eight were unusable for various reasons. Two were returned unopened because the librarians they were addressed to were no longer at that location. (This error was probably due to using the names listed in the *Official Directory of New Jersey Libraries and Media Centers* (Sprance, 1999); personnel changes may have occurred between the time names were submitted and the

publication date.) Two could not be answered because the person in charge of the library is a clerk and not a certified library media specialist. One survey was returned with a note stating the librarian was on an extended medical leave and, therefore, could not complete the questionnaire. Two respondents stated that neither remedial nor gifted students are included in their library programs; therefore, they did not answer any further questions as per the survey instructions. Another respondent returned the survey completely unanswered. A breakdown of usable survey returns by county may be found in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1

Usable Survey Response by County

County	# of surveys sent	# of surveys returned	Response Rate
Atlantic	6	6	100%
Bergen	20	12	60
Burlington	11	3	27
Camden	11	8	73
Cape May	5	2	40
Cumberland	5	2	40
Essex	6	4	67
Gloucester	8	3	38
Hudson	3	3	100
Hunterdon	8	6	75
Mercer	3	3	100
Middlesex	8	5	63
Monmouth	14	9	64
Morris	9	7	78
Ocean	8	4	50
Passaic	5	4	80
Salem	3	3	100
Somerset	5	4	80
Sussex	6	3	50
Union	6	5	83
Warren	6	3	50

## Description of Respondents

The survey was sent exclusively to elementary school librarians because reading instruction is more intensely focused in the lower grades. The respondents represent schools which encompass a wide variety of grade levels. As can be observed in Table 4-2, the largest percentage of librarians who completed the survey work in K-8 schools (20%), closely followed by K-6 (14%) and K-5 (14%) school populations. Much smaller return percentages (1% each) were achieved for schools housing grades PreK-3, PreK-4, PreK-7, K-9, 1-4, 2-5, and 4-8. Survey comments indicated that the librarians who work in schools which house only primary grades had more difficulty answering some of the questions due to the age and limited reading abilities of their patrons.

Table 4-2

### Grade Levels Taught by Survey Respondents (n=90)

<u>Grade Levels</u>	<u># Resp.</u>	<u>% Resp.</u>
PreK-2	4	4%
PreK-3	1	1
PreK-4	1	1
PreK-5	5	6
PreK-6	2	2
PreK-7	1	1
PreK-8	5	6
K-2	3	3
K-3	2	2
K-4	10	11
K-5	13	14
K-6	13	14
K-8	18	20
K-9	1	1
1-4	1	1
2-5	1	1
3-5	4	4
4-8	1	1
5-8	4	4

Note. Grade levels were provided by respondents in answer to Question 16 of the survey.

A vast majority of the 90 librarians, 80%, are responsible for just one library. Others divide their time and duties between two (16%), three (3%), and four (1%) sites.

Two related survey questions asked respondents to provide their number of years of experience in the library as well as any classroom experience they may have had. The researcher was working on the assumption that prior experience as a classroom teacher might provide a librarian with a greater understanding of the reading process and, as a result, exceptional readers. The purpose behind the experience questions was to provide the researcher with a deeper perspective of each librarian's background knowledge in reading instruction. In response, several survey recipients offered direct comments that they consider library experience to be equivalent to classroom experience, and thus proffered the same number of years experience for both. Upon analysis of the numerical data, the researcher determined that others may have drawn the same conclusion. In all likelihood, the responses related to classroom experience are not interpretable due to the confusion between the researcher's intended purpose and the respondents' perception of the questions. The figures in Table 4-3, therefore, reflect only the respondents' years of library experience.

Table 4-3

Library Experience of Respondents (n=90)

<u>Library Experience</u>		
Years	n	%
1-5	15	17%
6-10	23	26
11-15	17	19
16-20	9	10
21-25	13	14
26+	13	14

Seventy-three (85%) of the respondents answered in the affirmative when asked if they feel their knowledge of the reading process is adequate for responding to the diversity of reading levels encountered in each class of students. Four respondents offered no response. Of the thirteen librarians (15%) who answered no to this question, six added comments indicating their desire or need for basic information on reading or an extension of the background knowledge they already have. Sample comments included:

“I could probably use a course in teaching reading or understanding the reading process.”

“I never feel like I know enough. I always want to know more about learning and teaching.”

Responses to the questionnaire revealed that many of the library media specialists surveyed feel they have a strong reading-based background and actively pursue professional development in this area. Information on their backgrounds was given by 67 of the respondents, and Table 4-4 depicts the various venues they employ for professional growth. Thirty-one respondents (46%) cited college courses on both the undergraduate and graduate levels as being their primary source of knowledge about literacy development. This statistic was supported by the educational background information provided by some of the respondents. Many (at least 39% as indicated by responses to the question) hold elementary teaching degrees and attribute their insights into the reading process to their years of classroom teaching. Twenty respondents (30%) listed various educational degrees and/or certifications in subjects other than elementary education as part of their credentials, including Masters of Library Science degrees and Masters degrees in reading.

Workshops (34%) and inservices (19%) were also documented as popular professional development resources by the library media specialists surveyed. Useful topics such as integrating literature into the curriculum, reading motivation, brain-based instruction, and gifted and talented instruction were identified. Some of the respondents

(22%) also keep up with current learning theories and instructional methods through reading professional journals such as *Booklist*, *School Library Journal*, *School Librarian's Workshop*, and *The Reading Teacher*.

The "other" category on Table 4-4 represents responses that were mentioned by smaller percentages of respondents. Although they did not fall into the categories already described, they deserve the same recognition as sources for developing knowledge of the reading process and include: observation of and dialogue with classroom teachers; attendance at grade level meetings; meetings with special services personnel; years of experience within the library; articulation with other library media specialists; running reading enrichment programs within the library; teaching gifted and talented students; serving on a book evaluation committee; presenting reading workshops to parents; and affiliations with professional organizations.

Table 4-4

Background Experience Related to the Reading Process (n=67)

<u>Source</u>	<u># Responses</u>	<u>% Responses</u>
Undergraduate and Graduate College Courses	31	46%
Elementary Education Degree	26	39
Masters Degree in Library Science	8	12
Masters Degree in Reading	4	6
Other Educational Degree/Certification	8	12
Classroom Teaching Experience	8	12
Workshops	23	34
Inservices	13	19
Reading of Professional Journals	15	22
Other	14	21

Note. Respondents provided the categories listed in this table as per Question 13 on the survey. Some respondents listed multiple sources of background preparation.



### **Existence of Exceptional Readers in Library Programs**

The first question asked of the respondents was whether remedial and/or gifted readers are included in their library programs. Their answers indicated that remedial readers are found in 88 (96%) of the school library programs and gifted readers in 87 (95%). Two respondents (2%) reported that neither remedial nor gifted readers are part of their library programs; they did not respond to any further questions on the survey.

### **Collaboration Efforts**

Survey response tabulations revealed that 99% of the elementary school library media specialists who serve gifted and/or remedial readers stated they confer with others to ascertain the needs and strengths of the students in their programs, and 58% reported collaborating with more than one person. Respondents were asked to rate their collaboration based on a time-frequency continuum. Eighty-seven of the respondents indicated they collaborate on an “often” or “sometimes” basis, while two survey recipients disclosed they rarely collaborate with anyone. One response was uninterpretable by the researcher and could not be used. Table 4-5 charts the response percentages in the categories “often,” “sometimes,” and “rarely.”

As would be expected because of their close connection to the students, classroom teachers were named as being most frequently consulted. Reading specialists were cited also, but to a lesser degree. Eleven respondents could not answer the question regarding reading specialists either because they do not have one in their school(s) or because they are not in the building at the same time as the reading specialist due to multiple work sites.

Respondents were asked to write in additional individuals with whom they collaborate. Although their response rates were much lower than those for classroom teachers and reading specialists, the “others” sources added to the survey by respondents are included in Table 4-5 (see page 43) in order to show the extensive collaboration efforts being made by some school librarians in this study.

Table 4-5

Collaborative Partnerships within the Library (n=89)

Collaboration Partners	Often		Sometimes		Rarely	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Classroom Teachers	41	46%	45	51%	3	3%
Reading Specialists	18	20	24	27	19	21
Resource Room Teachers	3	3	5	6	0	0
Special Education Teachers	3	3	5	6	0	0
Gifted and Talented Teachers	0	0	1	1	0	0
ESL Teachers	2	2	1	1	0	0
Preschool Teachers	2	2	0	0	0	0
Speech Language Specialists	0	0	1	1	0	0
Child Study Team/Student IEPs	2	2	2	2	0	0
Curriculum Supervisor	1	1	0	0	0	0
Other Special Subjects Teachers	1	1	0	0	0	0
Principal	0	0	1	1	0	0
Other Library Media Specialists	1	1	0	0	0	0
Parents	0	0	4	4	0	0

Note. Respondents provided some of the categories listed in this table as per Question 2 on the survey. Some respondents listed multiple collaborative partnerships.

### Availability of Appropriate Materials For and About Exceptional Readers

The literature stresses the importance of having appropriate reading materials for exceptional readers in the library collection. All respondents answered the survey question regarding the availability of high interest-low vocabulary materials for remedial readers, and 96% reported the existence of these materials in the library, though some indicated their selection is small. Several librarians commented that it is difficult to find quality materials of this type for the elementary grades.

The questionnaire also asked about the inclusion of challenging materials for gifted readers, perhaps even some written on an adult level. All but one respondent answered this question, and 88% answered in the affirmative to having materials that would appeal

to gifted readers. Some librarians noted, however, that they do not include adult-level materials in their collections. The following quote is representative of their comments and is also in agreement with guidelines found in the literature review:

“Yes, I have challenging materials, but I don’t believe I need adult materials to do this. Adult books are often not appropriate socially or emotionally. Our gifted readers are still children, and do not - should not - be exposed to themes found in many adult books.”

A third question dealing with materials pertained to the inclusion of materials on reading disabilities and gifted readers in a professional library for use by parents, teachers, and possibly even older students. Again, all respondents answered this question, with an 81% majority indicating they have these materials available. Additional comments regarding this question indicated that many of the professional libraries are small and rarely used.

Table 4-6 summarizes the response percentages to the three questions relating to materials.

Table 4-6

Library Program Accommodations Relating to Appropriate Material Availability

	Materials for Remedial Readers (n=90)		Materials for Gifted Readers (n=89)		Professional Library (n=89)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Materials are available.	86	96%	78	88%	72	81%
Materials are not available.	4	4	11	12	17	19

### **Accessibility of Materials within the Library**

While it is important to have appropriate materials for all students, it is also vital that students be able to access them successfully. Survey recipients were asked several questions related to this aspect of their library program.

The first measure of accessibility involved how the books are shelved within each respondent's library. There were three unusable responses to this question. The majority (89%), however, reported that books are shelved for open access, allowing students to choose books which are appropriate to their interests and abilities. Five librarians indicated their library is arranged by grade level. Clarifying comments reiterated the use of alphabetical order for fiction and the Dewey Decimal system for nonfiction. One respondent utilizes open access as well as relying on circulation patterns for shelving books, while another maintains open access for students beyond grade one.

Two questions on the survey dealt with students' ability to locate materials without staff help. The first related to the use of signage and the second to the use of the catalog (either card or OPAC). Both sets of responses revealed that most librarians believe their students are capable of locating materials on their own. Others, however, vacillated over their responses to these questions and added comments to the effect that age, grade level, reading ability, and instruction in these areas are all elements that need to be taken into consideration in regards to these issues, with most students being capable from about the third grade on. The researcher acknowledges that the original question should have been worded to include these stipulations.

According to the survey, more than half of the school library media specialists included in the study indicated they work under schedules which allow for individual students to come to the library for independent study (66%) and/or book selection (70%). Two respondents did not answer the question. Comments revealed, however, that the librarian is not always available for assistance at these times due to scheduled classes or being at a different site. Negative responses (23%) to the question of availability

mentioned highly structured schedules, large numbers of students, multiple sites, and lack of sufficient staff as contributing factors to this problem. Others reported that, even if time is available, students often can't take advantage of it because their own schedules are too full.

### **Reading Guidance**

Another key element of material accessibility involves the direction and guidance offered by the librarian. The literature review offered a variety of methods that would help both remedial and gifted readers find library materials that would meet their interests and/or abilities. Survey recipients were asked to identify the methods they use to help students with book selection and to indicate how frequently they utilize each approach by checking a response of "often," "sometimes," or "rarely." All respondents answered this question, and all indicated they use more than one of the suggested methods. The results are tabulated in Table 4-7 (see page 47).

Book displays (84%), reader's advisory (67%), and read-aloud sessions (62%) appear to be the most favored forms of reading guidance among the librarians surveyed. Booktalks (45%) rated highest in the "sometimes" category; peer book reviews followed closely (43%), but received an almost equivalent (40%) "rarely" rating. The percentages for book discussion groups (54%), partner reading (49%), and instruction in using book selection aids (42%) reveal that these techniques tend to be used infrequently by the respondents. Partner reading is advocated in the literature as a technique to help remedial readers, while book discussion groups and the use of selection aids are recommended for gifted readers.

Suggestions for additional reading guidance activities were offered by three librarians. These included assigning book reports, presenting lessons on genres and author studies, and programs with visiting authors and illustrators.

Table 4-7

**Reading Guidance Techniques Utilized by Elementary School Library Media Specialists (n=89)**

Techniques	Often		Sometimes		Rarely	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Booktalks	39	44%	40	45%	5	6%
Book displays	75	84	10	11	3	3
Reader's Advisory	60	67	21	24	5	6
Direct instructional strategies which help a student determine a book's readability level	25	28	31	35	22	25
Partner reading with adult or another student	14	16	24	27	44	49
Read-alouds	55	62	23	26	8	9
Instruction on use of selection aids	20	22	22	25	37	42
Book discussion groups	12	13	20	22	48	54
Peer book reviews	8	9	38	43	36	40
Other	1	1	2	2	0	0

Note. Respondents checked as many answers as were applicable on Question 9 of the survey.

### Instruction in the Library

Instruction in the library may also need to be adjusted to meet the reading capabilities of all students, and the majority of the librarians surveyed recognize the necessity of doing so at least part of the time. Survey respondents were given a series of eleven statements related to instructional techniques or methods which they were asked to rate on a time-use continuum. They were to check "often," "sometimes," or "rarely" on all statements that applied to their instructional program within the library. Space was also provided for the respondents to offer other methods that were not identified by the researcher. All 90 respondents checked off at least one answer to this question. Table 4-8 (page 48) is a representation of the responses received.

Table 4-8

Instructional Strategies Employed by Elementary School Library Media Specialists (n=90)

Survey Statements	Often		Sometimes		Rarely	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
I don't have a need to adjust instruction.	12	18%	40	60%	29	32%
I adjust my expectations of student output based on their abilities.	53	59	28	31	2	2
I vary the pace of my instruction.	47	52	36	40	1	1
I tailor the content of my instruction to match student needs and abilities.	63	70	19	21	3	3
I model the processes I teach.	68	76	14	16	3	3
I use a multisensory instructional approach.	50	56	23	26	9	10
I offer individualized help or guidance.	71	79	14	16	2	2
I provide enrichment activities that allow students to explore topics at greater depths.	30	33	38	42	15	17
I offer students a variety of options for sharing what they've learned.	34	38	36	40	13	14
I group students heterogeneously for library activities and lessons.	47	52	7	8	22	24
I adjust check-out limits for students with special needs.	35	39	20	22	26	29
Other	2	2	2	2	0	0

Note. Respondents checked as many answers as were applicable on Question 6 of the survey.

Survey results show that the library media specialists in this study believe they are utilizing many of the instructional techniques suggested in the literature for working with exceptional readers on a frequent basis. "Often" responses fell below 50% on only three technique questions other than the final fill-in category. These involved providing enrichment activities that allow students to explore topics at greater depths, offering

students a variety of options for sharing what they've learned, and adjusting check-out limits for exceptional readers. All three of these strategies appeared in the literature related to gifted readers. Four additional approaches were suggested by the librarians; these include collaborating with classroom teachers whenever possible, teaching across the curriculum, consulting student IEPs for specific instructional modifications, and teaching to the students' ability and interest levels.

### **The Need for Further Education in the Field of Reading**

The final question on the survey asked the respondents for their thoughts on including a course in reading instruction as part of the required coursework for a degree or certification as a school library media specialist. Seventy-six (84%) of the 90 respondents offered an opinion on this topic; of these, 57 (79%) were strongly in favor of the idea. Sample comments about the inclusion of a course in reading were:

“Very important and necessary, especially in dealing with multiple intelligences and different learning disability classifications.”

“It would be helpful to understand the current reading processes used in the school systems.”

“Excellent idea! Librarians should have this background even though they may rarely have the time to actually teach it.”

A few respondents (9%) tempered an affirmative response to the question. Some of their comments were:

“It would depend on the content. Some teachers have a wealth of knowledge already. Perhaps as an elective.”

“I think it would be an asset to the degree program for those who haven't been required to take reading instruction courses.”

“Mixed feelings as book selection is only one part of my job, and research skills seem to take up so much of my class time.”



Other respondents did not feel the need for a reading course in the library media specialist program. There were eight (11%) negative responses to the question. The following comments represent the opposing point of view:

“Reading instruction should be part of general teacher certification. The LMS needs to be aware of symptoms of problems, but is not responsible for teaching the process to the students.”

“My goal is not to “teach” reading, rather to find the right “hook” to entice the reluctant reader and to expand the gifted child’s range. Therefore, I feel it is more important to continually increase my knowledge of literature available.”

“I don’t think it is necessary if you keep yourself informed through reading journals, attending “best” book inservices, and articulating with other media specialists.”

## **Summary**

This chapter presented the tabulated survey responses of 90 elementary library media specialists working throughout the state of New Jersey. The survey was designed to gain the librarians’ perspective on their role in reaching exceptional readers. The final chapter of this thesis summarizes the study and offers the conclusions drawn by the researcher. Recommendations for further study are also made.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

#### **Summary**

Literacy development is a vital life skill. An individual who lacks the ability to read, understand, and use information functions at a significant disadvantage in modern society. Thus, it is a primary function of our educational system to provide students with the instruction and access to information that will help them become proficient in literacy skills. The school library media center plays a significant role in encouraging children to read, and this role has expanded as the range of information resources has grown.

In the complimentary roles of teacher and instructional partner, the school library media specialist plans and implements lessons and activities that draw children into the world of reading for both pleasure and informational purposes. This task may be affected, however, by the diverse range of reading abilities present in each class of students. The librarian needs to be aware of and utilize appropriate materials and instructional strategies that will provide support for all students, while also making library resources easily accessible to them.

This study was designed to analyze if and how the needs of two particular groups of readers are being met in elementary school libraries throughout the state of New Jersey. These “exceptional” readers were defined as gifted or remedial based on whether they read above or below grade level expectations. Only elementary schools were included since this is where instruction in learning how to read is focused.

During the months of February and March, 2000, a randomly selected group of school library media specialists was surveyed in regards to identification of remedial and gifted students, collaboration efforts with other professionals, material accessibility within

the library, and instructional methods and reading guidance techniques employed. Also taken into consideration was the librarians' background knowledge in the field of reading. Their opinions were solicited on whether or not they felt their training was adequate for preparing them to reach exceptional readers and whether they felt a course in reading instruction should be a requirement for earning a school library degree.

Survey results showed that the school library media specialists polled are indeed aware of the existence of exceptional readers in their library programs. They attempt to meet the needs of these students, although analysis shows that gifted readers may not receive as much direct intervention as remedial readers. The majority of librarians have some background in reading instruction and actively pursue professional development in the field, but also believe it would be an asset to have a course in reading as part of the school library science certification or degree program.

## **Conclusions**

The original hypothesis behind this study was that school librarians are aware of student strengths and weaknesses and try to adapt their programs in order to meet those needs. Through a review of the literature, the researcher identified six variables that may impact exceptional readers within a library program, and measured them by use of a survey. The resulting statistics supported the hypothesis, enabling the researcher to draw some conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the librarians' accommodation efforts.

The librarian's background knowledge of the reading process was considered to be an important variable by the researcher. This knowledge, or the lack thereof, has definite implications on whether or not the librarian recognizes the need to make adjustments for the diverse reading abilities he/she encounters in every class of students and to what extent these adjustments are made. A very large majority of the survey respondents reported being satisfied with their training in the field of reading, and many continue to keep abreast of new trends, instructional methods, and materials through professional development

pursuits. At the same time, many responded in the affirmative to the survey question which asked for their thoughts on requiring a reading course as part of school librarian certification; some assumed that it already was.

It is true that many school library media specialists serve as classroom teachers prior to their work in the library. As such, they would have received training in the reading process and its instruction. In addition, 58% of the librarians in this study have over ten years of working experience in the library. While a course in reading may not be necessary for all new school librarians, it could be an asset to those without teaching experience or previous background training. While the librarian does not have to be a reading expert, as a teacher, he/she needs to be aware of the characteristics of readers at all developmental levels in order to make the library a profitable reading and learning environment for every student.

The second variable of the study dealt with the occurrence of collaborative sessions between the school librarian and others who have knowledge of students' learning needs, and it was concluded that this collaboration is taking place. Classroom teachers are the primary consultants, but most collaboration, no matter who the participants are, appears to occur on a "sometimes" basis. Contributing factors to the amount of collaborating done (as discerned from survey comments) include multiple work sites, teaching duties in addition to those of librarian, library classes serving as prep time for classroom teachers, large school populations, and the lack of particular school personnel, such as reading specialists.

The provision of appropriate reading materials and resources was identified as another variable in a library media program, and, again, the New Jersey school librarian appears to be trying to meet this requirement. Materials written for remedial readers appear in all but 4% of the collections managed by the surveyed librarians; this applies even to primary schools where the need for such materials is not as great. The awareness of the need for low-level/high interest reading material is tempered, in some cases, by

budget constraints, resulting in a limited selection of titles. Several librarians mentioned that quality materials written at lower reading levels for elementary-age children are difficult to find. One librarian expressed a concern over having them in the library since “better readers sometimes gravitate to them out of laziness.”

The need for reading materials written on a challenging level for gifted readers was also acknowledged by the school librarians, with over three-fourths of them (88%) saying they house such materials in their libraries. The question of appropriateness arose over the researcher’s suggestion of the inclusion of some materials written on an adult level, although survey comments indicated that many of the respondents considered this question solely in terms of the fiction in their collections. (The question, as worded on the survey, was not specific in terms of types of materials, a probable error on the part of the researcher.) Since some librarians in the study work in schools that accommodate only the lower elementary grades, they find that “challenging” can refer to materials written only as high as the 4th-6th grade reading levels. Several librarians consider the classics and/or the Caldecott and Newbery Award winners as their gifted collection. Again, as with remedial reading materials, the amount of challenging material for gifted readers in each library tends to be limited.

The ease with which a child may locate appropriate reading materials within the library was also measured as a program variable. A positive indication that students are being helped in this direction is reflected by the fact that the overwhelming majority of survey respondents say they provide their students with open access to all materials in the library, thus allowing for individual reading needs and interest levels to be met. Accessibility to library materials through the use of signage and the catalog, as noted by the comments of many of the library media specialists, is dependent on a student’s age and reading ability. Other deterrents include out-of-date card catalogs that have not been well-maintained, recent changeovers to an automated system, and students who would rather ask for help than take the initiative to look for a book on their own. Orientation

and instruction were pointed out as being essential elements of student success in these areas.

A final component of the accessibility variable involved library availability for independent study and/or book selection by students. A substantial number of respondents reported that this is a possibility for their students, again confirming the librarians' efforts to meet student needs.

All children may benefit from guidance in book selection, the fifth variable under study, and this assistance is especially crucial to exceptional readers. While all of the librarians surveyed reported utilizing varied and multiple approaches to reading guidance, the time-use percentage patterns for five of the nine suggested techniques reveal that two are being used primarily on a "sometimes" basis, and the other three are "rarely" used. These same five techniques are also being used by fewer respondents than the other four. Two of these strategies come from the literature on remedial readers: direct, instructional strategies which help a student determine a book's readability level (primarily used on a "sometimes" basis) and having the child read with an adult or student partner (used "rarely"). The other three methods are directly related to working with gifted readers: instructing students on the use of selection aids (used "rarely"), holding book discussion groups (used "rarely"), and encouraging students to write peer book reviews (used "sometimes").

When these five approaches are scrutinized in conjunction with all of the other information provided by the survey respondents, it is feasible to conclude that logistics such as time factors, large student populations, and multiple work sites (causing some librarians to be unavailable during book selection periods) may play a role in their weaker usage ratings. Reading guidance, however, is an area that should not be overlooked when working with exceptional readers. Guidance for the remedial reader should offer an introduction to books, help to extend the child's experience, and provide him/her with a motivation to read. While the gifted reader may not need reading motivation, he/she still

needs guidance in the introduction of materials that will encourage and challenge him/her creatively and intellectually (Cleary, 1972).

The teaching experience of the surveyed librarians is evident from their responses to the survey question dealing with the sixth and final variable in the study, instructional adjustments made for exceptional readers. In all but two instances, survey statistics show that effective instructional strategies are reportedly used “often” during lessons and activities in the respondents’ libraries. The two exceptions fall into the “sometimes” category and include providing enrichment activities that allow students to explore topics at greater depths and offering students a variety of options for sharing what they’ve learned. Both instructional suggestions were offered in the literature on gifted readers.

The information drawn from the discussion of the final two study variables suggests that the gifted reader may be somewhat overlooked in New Jersey elementary school library programs. In many ways, this is understandable, for while the special needs of the remedial reader are rather easily identifiable, those of the gifted reader are far less overt. The gifted reader is usually self-sufficient in his/her book selection and is less likely to claim the librarian’s attention with poor behavior or requests for help. And while there are educational consultants such as reading specialists and Child Study Teams with whom the librarian may confer concerning the problems of the remedial reader, many Gifted and Talented programs are disappearing due to budget cutbacks and the trend toward heterogeneous classrooms.

As was discussed in the literature review, adjustments in reading guidance and instruction are equally important for remedial and gifted readers since both need opportunities to grow and develop. The school librarian must make the necessary accommodations that will offer support and encouragement to the remedial reader who is struggling to learn to read and also guide the gifted reader in the use of print and other media so that for him/her “reading may become an art as well as a skill” (Cleary, 1972, p. 153).

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

The intent of this study was to examine the efforts being made by New Jersey elementary school librarians to meet the needs of remedial and gifted readers within their library programs. The results of a self-administered survey completed by 90 librarians show that there is an awareness of these students and that accommodations are being made for them. It appears, however, that adjustments made for exceptional readers in instruction and reading guidance, as suggested in the literature, may not be occurring on a regular basis. Further research would be necessary to determine the effects of present program accommodations on the students and whether or not additional student support within the library is needed.

If further research in this area were conducted, or if this study were to be replicated, it is recommended that the focus be narrowed to the examination of program accommodations for just one type of exceptional reader at a time. The researcher believes that a more rounded picture of each librarian's efforts to reach children with divergent reading abilities could be obtained in this manner. Additional insights could be garnered through direct observation of the librarians and library programs under study. This would lessen the researcher's dependence on survey responses which may or may not accurately depict what is actually transpiring in the library.

The results of this study point especially to the need for further investigation into library accommodations being made for gifted readers. Based on the current findings, it may be necessary for schools and librarians to reanalyze the components of their programs which are important for gifted readers in order to ensure these students' success in discovery and self-learning.

A final recommendation of this research project centers around the inclusion of a course in reading as part of the requirement for school librarian certification. It is acknowledged that a master's program in school library science is already credit-heavy, and no one desires to add additional required courses. If the school librarian is to accept



the role of teacher and educational partner, however, then he/she must also accept that he/she is a teacher of reading. This viewpoint is represented in the following statement from a book on reading guidance (Cleary, 1972, p. 64):

“...the librarian becomes “a teacher of reading” as he reads aloud, introduces illustrated books, guides the child as he reads silently, and asks questions that help him see the relationships between the printed symbols and the ideas reflected in the words that in combination tell a story, imply meanings, and suggest ideas.”

With the older pupil the task continues. The librarian helps him to reorganize and reclassify information, to accommodate his own thoughts to new ideas and relationships, to build more complex cognitive structures as he reinforces and classifies concepts and corrects misconceptions. The librarian cannot ignore his responsibility for the skills and processes of reading.”

The researcher’s belief that a course in reading instruction is fundamental to a school librarian’s background was supported by the vast majority of New Jersey librarians who responded to the research survey. It is suggested here as a topic for further thought and consideration by those responsible for librarian preparation programs and also for those who are considering entering the field of school librarianship.

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## Appendix



Department of Secondary Education/Foundations of Education  
*Program in School and Public Librarianship*

February 18, 2000

Dear Library-Media Specialist:

I am a graduate student in School Librarianship at Rowan University. As part of the requirements for my master's degree, I am investigating how the reading needs of remedial and gifted readers may be met in the school library. As part of my research, I have prepared the enclosed survey which seeks information on your program and the accommodations you, as librarian, make for students whose reading abilities place them outside the realm of the average reader.

I fully appreciate the time demands of being a school librarian, but I hope you will take a few minutes to respond to the survey questions.

Confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed as you do not need to sign your name to the survey. I, alone, as the researcher, will have access to the survey data. While your cooperation is essential to the success of my research, it is, of course, voluntary; there is no penalty of any kind if you should choose not to participate. You may answer any or all of the questions. A copy of the results will be available upon request.

If you have any further questions, you may contact me (phone: 610-583-7220; e-mail: justbev@juno.com), or Dr. Holly Willett, my research advisor (phone: 856-256-4759; e-mail: willett@rowan.edu).

Please return the completed survey in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope by March 3, 2000. Thank you very much for your help and cooperation. It is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Beverly S. Siti





Thank you again for taking the time to complete this survey. I extend my deepest gratitude to you!

If you would like to receive a summary of my research results, please complete the following information and include it in the survey envelope. You may also e-mail the information to me at [justbev@juno.com](mailto:justbev@juno.com). Your name and address will not be attached to the survey in any way, assuring your confidentiality and anonymity.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Beverly Siti  
Graduate Student

Survey of School Library Program Accommodations for Meeting  
the Needs of Gifted and Remedial Readers

PLEASE CHECK ALL APPROPRIATE ANSWERS.

1. Which of the following students are included in your school library program?

- ☐ Remedial readers (students reading below grade level)
- ☐ Gifted readers (students reading well above grade level)
- ☐ Neither of the above *(Thank you! Please return the survey now.)*

2. Do you confer with other school personnel in order to identify students' reading needs or strengths? *Please check all that apply.*

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
a. Classroom teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Reading specialists	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

3. Are books shelved

- ☐ for open access, allowing students to choose books appropriate to their interests and abilities?
- ☐ by grade level?
- ☐ other \_\_\_\_\_?

4. Would a student in your library be able to locate materials without staff help using only the signage?

- ☐ Yes      ☐ No

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

5. Would a student in your library be able to locate materials without staff help through the use of the catalog (card or OPAC)?

- ☐ Yes      ☐ No

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

6. How do you adjust instruction to meet the reading capabilities of all students? *Please check all that apply.*

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
a. I don't have a need to adjust instruction.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. I adjust my expectations of student output based on their abilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. I vary the pace of my instruction.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. I tailor the content of my instruction to match student needs and abilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. I model the processes I teach.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. I use a multisensory instructional approach.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. I offer individualized help or guidance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. I provide enrichment activities that allow students to explore topics at greater depths.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. I offer students a variety of options for sharing what they've learned.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. I group students heterogeneously for library activities and lessons.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. I adjust check-out limits for students with special needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Does your collection include high interest, low level vocabulary materials for remedial readers?

☐ Yes      ☐ No

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

8. Does your collection include challenging materials for gifted readers, perhaps even some written on an adult level?

☐ Yes      ☐ No

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

9. Which, if any, of the following techniques do you utilize when helping students choose appropriate materials? *Please check all that apply.*

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
a. Booktalks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Book displays	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Reader's advisory - informal one-on-one conversations with students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Direct, instructional strategies which help a student determine a book's readability level (Ex. Pick a Book by Hand; the Goldilocks strategy) Please describe your strategy _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Partner reading with adult or another student	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Read-alouds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Instruction on use of selection aids such as book reviews, Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Book discussion groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Peer book reviews	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. Does your library schedule allow time for individual students to come to the library for:

☐ independent study?      ☐ book selection?

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

11. Do you include materials on reading disabilities and gifted readers in your professional library for use by teachers, parents, and possibly even older students?

☐ Yes      ☐ No

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

12. Do you feel your knowledge of the reading process is adequate for responding to the diversity of reading levels you encounter in each class?

☐ Yes      ☐ No

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

13. Please describe any background preparation (college courses, inservices, workshops, journal articles, etc.) you may have related to the teaching of the reading process.

14. What are your thoughts on adding a course in reading instruction as part of the required coursework for a degree or certification as a school library media specialist?

15. For how many libraries are you responsible? \_\_\_\_\_

16. What grade levels does your school(s) include? \_\_\_\_\_

17. How many years of library experience do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

18. How many years of classroom experience, if any, do you have? \_\_\_\_\_



Department of Secondary Education/Foundations of Education  
*Program in School and Public Librarianship*

Dear School Library Media Specialist,

Recently, I sent you a survey regarding accommodations made by school librarians to meet the needs of remedial and gifted readers.

If you have already completed and returned the survey, may I take this opportunity to thank you again for your time and input.

If you have not yet responded, would you please take a few minutes to answer the survey questions. An additional copy of the survey may be obtained through calling (610) 583-7220 or e-mailing me at [justbev@juno.com](mailto:justbev@juno.com).

Thank you for your assistance in my research.

Sincerely,

Beverly Siti  
Graduate Student

## Survey Comments

The librarians who responded to the survey on program accommodations for exceptional readers were encouraged to add pertinent comments wherever they felt further explanation was needed. The following is a list of those comments. All identifying details have been removed, and each response from a different librarian has been bulleted. Grammatical errors and spelling have not been corrected.

### **Survey Question 2: Do you confer with other school personnel in order to identify students' reading needs or strengths?**

- I look for this info at the beginning of the year usually. Since reading levels don't change drastically, I answered "sometimes," but I'm always aware of students' needs.
- We usually only get a chance to talk when there is a specific problem or need.
- I do not do circulation - volunteers are here for that. I have two schools.
- It is on a by-need basis. Some years it is more so than others.
- First year or first time students abilities need to be identified. After that, I get to know the students in my K-3 building.
- I work in two buildings - the reading teacher and I are never in the same school at the same time.
- I usually find that I ask more questions about the reluctant readers whose needs I find difficult to fulfill (to get them to read).

### **Survey Question 3: Are books shelved for open access, allowing students to choose books appropriate to their interests and abilities, by grade level, or by another system?**

- Easy books for grades K-2 are separate from juvenile fiction books for grades 3-8.
- We have an easy section, older section, and basically fiction paperbacks by easy (K-2), middle readers (2-5), and older readers (4-8).
- We have two areas - The lower area marked by "E's" would be ages (grades) 2 and lower. This includes nonfiction.
- Dewey Decimal.
- K-2 and 3-5 areas.
- Fiction - alphabetical order; Nonfiction - Dewey Decimal.
- We do have accelerated reading books. The books are tabbed with grade levels. We are starting Guiding Reading. Some teachers have flagged levels of books with letters on green dots.
- Circulation patterns.
- Dewey System with classification labels to help.

- We have a K-8 school. Things must be in different sections.
- Grouped K-2, 3-6, and 7-9.
- I plan to label nonfiction with "E" labels so younger students and lower level readers can identify appropriate materials more easily.
- Bilingual and Spanish books are Dewey-ordered, but separate from English.
- According to Dewey for nonfiction and series books are grouped separately.

**Survey Question 4: Would a student in your library be able to locate materials without staff help using only the signage?**

- They are taught as early as first grade where to find all types of materials. Most need help finding specific titles/subjects until about 3rd grade.
- With an understanding of numbers for Dewey Decimal classification.
- Probably not - although signs are there.
- Depends on age and level of expertise of child.
- Actually, yes and no. Challenged readers would have a hard time choosing between K-2 books. The library is only split into two reading levels.
- Fourth and fifth graders can. Third graders need guidance.
- When the media center is functioning, children are able to locate books. We are going through some major changes.
- By second grade.
- If they have been students here, there would be no problem. New students would need help.
- At times, yes.
- K-1 needs help.
- From third grade up.
- Not all students, but a majority.
- Some students need little or no help, while others need help all the time.
- Difficult to answer - depends upon the ability of the student.
- Orientation is a must!
- It is a PreSchool-2nd school. Their ability to locate increases as they get older.
- Except for special education/multiple handicapped.
- K and 1 need to develop alphabetizing skills for fiction location. Grades 2-3 become independent through instruction.
- I'm not sure. Some can, but most need help.
- Perhaps with some help.
- Worked hard on this.
- Older students would have no trouble; younger ones do.
- We have a small collection. Most in grades 3-5 know where to find their preferences.
- I very carefully teach this to all grades every year.
- Some would, not all.



- With instruction in call numbers and types of books (E, F, NF, and B), students follow signs well, but they are subject to misinterpretation without instruction.
- Do they? No.
- I work toward that end. K-4 it's hard to always be sure.

**Survey Question 5: Would a student in your library be able to locate materials without staff help through the use of the catalog (card or OPAC)?**

- We just moved into a new library in March, and the books aren't arranged in quite the same way as our old library. However, the students are adjusting.
- Again - after 3rd grade or so, students can easily use the library - 1st and 2nd graders learn how to find favorite authors in the fiction section and soon learn where to find their favorite nonfiction topics (i.e., dinosaurs, reptiles, etc.). j Have recently put materials online and students are being acquainted with how to use it.
- I teach grade 3-6 in formal lessons and grades 1-2 informally. Still some students need help and some students just like your attention (that's OK).
- Depends on age and level of expertise of child.
- K-1-2 not ready to read cards.
- Remember I have a PreK-8 school. Questions 4 and 5 depend on grade level. Grade 2 is introduced to the OPAC.
- Third and fourth graders need help with call numbers. Most fifth graders can.
- They would rather ask for help.
- When the media center is functioning, children are able to locate books. We are going through some major changes. Children are taught in skills classes how to search and find materials.
- By second grade.
- Limited use due to reading ability; we are a K-3 school.
- [No.] This is a K-2 library.
- Again, not all, but many.
- Third through sixth grade can. First and second grade need help.
- Some students.
- Grades 3-5 - Again it depends upon the student's ability/knowledge.
- Grades 2 on.
- Again, it depends on level of the student.
- Card catalog is obsolete; Not automated yet - not taught.
- Grades 2-3 need assistance. Grades 4-6 can use the catalog.
- K-1 need to develop reading and alphabetizing skills. Grades 2-3 become independent through instruction. Some are better at grasping concepts than others.
- I answered "no" because we are only Grades K-1 here. (This comment, phrased identically, was made by two respondents.)

- At least, hopefully, from grades 3-8.
- Grades 3-6 can.
- Again, younger ones need help. Since our library is staffed only once a week and then only for book sign-out weekly and library skills 15 days a year, our card catalog is not well kept-up.
- It depends - the card catalog is not up-to-date.
- Only 5th graders. Our catalog is not up-to-date yet.
- They try, but the card catalog is obsolete and OPAC is not yet available.
- PreK-Gr. 1 cannot; Grade 2 can.
- Do they? No.
- I hope, by the end of grade 3.
- Not all.
- Many can, many need assistance.

**Survey Question 6: How do you adjust instruction to meet the reading capabilities of all students?**

Comments made in reference to offering individualized help or guidance:

- All the time!
- When possible. I am a “prep” and locked into 45/week only.

Comments made in reference to heterogeneous grouping:

- I have no choice in this.
- Library is a prep, therefore all students come at same time; little opportunity for me to group.

Comment made in reference to providing enrichment activities that allow students to explore topics at greater depths:

- My library classes are weekly or even every other week. I barely have time to cover material, read aloud, and check out books.
- There is usually a time problem - not enough of it.

Comment made in reference to adjusting expectations of student output based on their abilities:

- Expectations are never lowered! I vary the pace of my instruction instead.

Comments made in reference to offering students a variety of options for sharing what they’ve learned:

- Especially in group projects.
- There is usually no time to do this.

Other instructional adjustments practiced by survey respondents:

- I collaborate with classroom teachers whenever possible.
- I teach across the curriculum.
- I consult student IEPs for specific modifications to students' instruction.
- I teach to many ability and interest levels.

**Survey Question 7: Does your collection include high interest, low level vocabulary materials for remedial readers?**

- We have some materials, but are working to build this area.
- Not a large selection.
- Not as much as I'd like, due to budget constraints. (This comment, phrased identically, was made by two respondents.)
- I am in a PreK-4 building. There isn't as much need for this.
- But I don't separate it.
- It's difficult to find this type of materials for K-5.
- ...but sometimes the wrong students want them, i.e. the best readers - just lazy.
- In this K-1 school, we have beginner readers so most of our materials are high interest, low level vocabulary.
- Not the way you probably mean it. I'm in a primary school. The collection includes from "pure" picture books to about grade 4/5 materials.
- Most of our population requires this type material.
- But not enough. Many parents here have very high expectations, and some direct their children to select books based on "reading level" found on book or on OPAC entry, e.g.. 4th grader looks for reading level 6+.
- Fiction and nonfiction.
- I try to maintain a variety - something for everyone's needs.

**Survey Question 8: Does your collection include challenging materials for gifted readers, perhaps even some written on an adult level?**

- Yes, I have challenging materials, but I don't believe I need adult materials to do this. Adult books are often not appropriate socially or emotionally. Our gifted readers are still children, and do not/should not be exposed to themes found in many adult books.
- It is limited. Our library is mainly used K-5 and research mainly from 6-8.
- I don't include materials written on an adult level since I work in a K-4 library.
- Our building houses the Gifted Students from the entire district.
- Paperback fiction.
- Gifted readers but not adult level.

- Adult level - not many.
- Most books in our collection range from PreK-4th/5th grade even though our school is K-2.
- Each library has all the Caldecott and Newbery Award winning books.
- Not a lot due to content of adult material.
- I even provide teachers with guides to use with novels for gifted readers.
- We are K-4. Appropriateness would be an issue.
- Original *Huckleberry Finn*, *Little Women*, and *Little Men* are about the only ones.
- Finding ones with appropriate content can be difficult.
- Not on an adult level!
- My school is at a K-4 level. Books may include K-6 reading level.
- I only have up to grade 5 - some YA literature.
- No adult books. We do not require very high level to be challenging, but, yes, we challenge all our students.
- The biggest problem is dealing with “maturity” difficulties in higher reading level materials.
- Not many.

**Survey Question 9: Which, if any, of the following techniques do you utilize when helping students choose appropriate materials?**

Comments made in reference to direct instructional strategies which help a student determine a book’s readability:

- Open book to middle. If student can read it, it is OK for their readability. (This comment, phrased identically, was made by two respondents.)
- Five finger rule: Pick any page and read, put up one finger every time you stumble over/don’t know a word. If you get to five, put the book back and try it again later. Your skills change so fast, maybe next month this will be a breeze for you. Look on the same shelf for another book on that topic that is better for you. Don’t expect to be able to read everything in here - we have books for everyone in the school, K-adult! (Twenty respondents described a variation of the five finger rule.)
- I ask students to read sentence from the book aloud and explain the meaning to me.
- Students read for me - one page or so - I can hear what words they stumble on and then I ask them to tell me what they read (comprehension). (A variation of this comment was made by four respondents.)
- I suggest the Judy Freeman finger method, the reading of book jacket blurbs, and I also resort to having students privately read aloud to me.
- Students check reading level designation labels on paperbacks. Green spine labels identify Grade 2 chapter books and bright orange labels identify Grade 3 chapter books.

Comment made in reference to instruction on use of selection aids:

- No funding available although I've used it (Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature) and would like to have it.

Comment made in reference to partner reading with adult or another student:

- Done in classrooms.

Comment made in reference to book discussion groups:

- Held in reading classes.

Other reading guidance techniques practiced by respondents:

- I assign book reports.
- Lessons on genres, on book selection techniques, author studies, etc.
- Programs with visiting authors and illustrators help stimulate interest.

**Survey Question 10: Does your library schedule allow time for individual students to come to the library for independent study and/or book selection?**

- I allow them in at any time during the school day. If I have a class, they know not to disturb me.
- We are partially flex-scheduled.
- NO! It's very sad - students may only use the library the two days I'm here. While I am here, everyone is welcome, anytime! - even if I have a class!
- Time is available, but not many come.
- Nineteen scheduled classes/week. Balance of day is flex time. Full time secretary.
- We are very fortunate in this way!
- Third grade is structured. Fourth and fifth grades have open access. Twenty minute scheduled circulation times.
- We do have a schedule, but also have "open" time - the best of both worlds!
- Only Junior High students do this.
- Students come with their class.
- Students K-5 come to the library once a week for a library skills lesson, and once a week for circulation.
- Students may come any time they wish.
- We are scheduled with 30 classes per week as prep time! Not much extra, but if student really needs materials, I try to satisfy needs.
- Classes are scheduled for a 30 minute class each week. I have 41 classes each week servicing approximately 960 children.
- Very limited.
- Students come to the library twice a week - once for skills instruction (teachers' prep) and once for book selection (classroom teacher stays with them). I am then at another school. I am rarely present for book selection.

- No. Children come by class. Occasionally come in twos.
- During recess and regular class once a week.
- It is getting more and more difficult with the increase in classes.
- Unfortunately, the students' schedules are too full.
- Some do but we have a very fixed full schedule so they are on their own when they do.
- Sometimes. (This comment, phrased identically, was made by two respondents.)
- Very limited. One grade only is on flex schedule.
- Varies by grade level.
- Not always with my help or supervision as I am busy with another class.
- Every class comes once a week for instruction and book selection. Additional visits would be for research.
- We never close or turn students away.
- Because of budget constraints, the library isn't staffed except for once a week. Independent study can't be done, as the library is used for a variety of things during the week, e.g., counseling.
- I cover two schools and see almost 700 students per week on a scheduled basis.
- Students choose books during Library/Computer class time. They are welcome individually whenever teachers allow them to come down. This library is always booked and rarely free.
- Yes, but without teacher guidance if I am with a class.
- No, in fact, I am not available on book selection days as I am split between two schools.
- I have scheduled classes.
- Very little time is available. I serve two buildings and am not available except before and after school at one site (K-4). Grades 5 and 6 have no opportunity to come to the library except with their class. They are bussed in from other locations.
- Not really. Students may select a book whenever I am free - before/after school, prep, lunch. Students may use library for independent study, but most often I will also have a school class at the same time.
- Students come to the library with the class.
- The students can only take advantage of this on rare occasions.
- I am also the Title I reading teacher, and I am only in the library for my nine library classes per week.
- At the discretion of the classroom teacher. As long as I will be in the library it's fine with me.

**Survey Question 11: Do you include materials on reading disabilities and gifted readers in your professional library for use by teachers, parents, and possibly even older students?**

- Funding is insufficient for any professional materials.
- We are currently building our professional library.
- Only for use by teachers and parents.
- Do not have much.
- Again, not much.
- We have a small professional library section. (This comment, phrased identically, was voiced by two respondents.)
- For teachers mainly.
- We don't maintain a professional library. Teachers have their own materials.
- [Yes] However, I constantly have to remind teachers that these are here. They tend to forget.
- Very little.
- Rarely used.
- Limited.
- But very seldom used.
- Good selection of magazines, journals, and periodicals.

**Survey Question 12: Do you feel your knowledge of the reading process is adequate for responding to the diversity of reading levels you encounter in each class?**

- [Yes] I'm K-8 certified in the classroom and taught for years before working in the library.
- [No] I could probably use a course in teaching reading or understanding reading process.
- Adequate, yes. However, I am looking into different workshops such as Reading Assist, etc.
- [No] I never feel like I know enough. I always want to know more about learning and teaching.
- [Yes] Generally.
- [Yes] Could always use a brush-up.
- [No] I could always learn more.
- [Yes] Taught reading in my previous life!
- [Respondent checked neither yes or no.] I could use more courses on the reading process, but students tend to check books out according to interests. Parents should be reading to their children on a regular basis, and books too hard for the students could be read by the parents.
- [No] There's always more to learn.

- [Yes] I had previously taught grades 2, 3, and 4 for 13 years before becoming a media specialist.
- [Yes] My background is one of an elementary education major/teacher librarian/media specialist (Master).
- [Respondent checked neither yes or no.] Probably not - I'm always learning something new.
- [Yes] Well trained - first grade teacher for ten years until this job recently.
- [Yes] Post-grad work in reading, language, and culture.
- [Yes] What is inadequate is my knowledge of individual students and their abilities due to the large number of students I am responsible for yet see only 2-4 times per month.
- [Yes] But I really am not a "reading teacher." I make materials accessible. I will allow a child to select a book beyond my assessment of his reading ability for pictures, etc.
- [No] Not fully trained in classifications, e.g. perceptually impaired, spatial impairments, etc.
- [Respondent checked neither yes or no.] Knowledge of available new titles is just as relevant.

**Survey Question 13: Please describe any background preparation (college courses, inservices, workshops, journal articles, etc.) you may have related to the teaching of the reading process.**

- Hold a teacher's degree.
- I have three certifications - elementary education, secondary English, L.M.S
- College coursework; articles in professional library journals.
- Elementary education certification (This comment, phrased identically, was made by two respondents.
- I'm K-8 certified in the classroom and taught for years before working in the library.
- Haven't really had any.
- B.A. program in elementary education (from Glassboro!); M.A. in learning disabilities (Fairleigh Dickinson); numerous workshops on integrated literature, whole language, etc. (Whatever the flavor of the season is!)
- While I was studying to be a teacher (undergrad), I remember a reading course I took. The most I remember that I got out of it was the readability formula for books.
- M.A. in reading.
- Teaching reading; Accelerated reading; WINNERS! Book Talk workshop; TriCounty Reading Council member; Highlands Regional Library Coop Book Evaluation Group; other.
- Elementary education degree; 2 graduate courses in reading; Reading Motivation workshop - Jim Trelease; instruction in booktalks.



- Reading courses from my Masters program as well as library science coursework.
- I subscribe to *School Library Journal*, *Booklist*, and *Horn Book*. I also attend best book inservices that are available. Articulation with other media specialists is also helpful.
- Methods courses; frequent workshops of various purposes.
- M.L.S - Media Specialist.
- I had one or two college courses in reading, numerous workshops over the past 25 years, and I try to keep up on reading trends, etc. through journals.
- College reading courses; inservices; workshop experiences.
- College courses; graduate courses; inservices; writing workshops; Gifted and Talented instruction; professional reading; training as a classroom teacher.
- Tons - also 24 credits towards Reading Specialist; Have M.L.S.
- I have had many classes and workshops in reading over a 38 year teaching career. I also give workshops on reading to parents of children who attend Chapter I reading class. Reading and writing were the main thrusts of my graduate and post grad work.
- I am certified as an elementary teacher and taught in a classroom for five years before becoming a media specialist.
- Children's literature; the psychology of reading; actual experience teaching reading to all age levels including college.
- B.A. in elementary education; M.A. in elementary education with a focus on reading; 130 credits - Certified Educational Media Specialist.
- Nothing as relates to the actual teaching of the reading process.
- B.S. in elementary education; graduate courses in reading; workshops in developing use of different books.
- Undergraduate course - Teaching of Reading.
- I have a master's degree in developmental reading.
- I have taken college courses on reading instruction.
- Undergraduate course in teaching reading as part of my elementary education degree.
- I had been a second and third grade classroom teacher for four and a half years before becoming a librarian. In library school, literature courses were also helpful in enhancing my knowledge of the reading process as are EMA and Judy Freeman's workshops along with regular reading of *School Library Journal*, *School Librarian's Workshop*, and *The Reading Teacher*.
- I worked 15 years as a first grade teacher and three years as a third grade self-contained classroom teacher before acquiring library responsibilities. I have taken college courses in reading, attended numerous workshops and inservices, and try to keep up-to-date with professional journals.
- I have had one college course in reading. I am a LMS, not a reading teacher.
- I was a first grade teacher for 20 years before becoming librarian. I attend many inservices, workshops, and grade level meetings to keep myself aware of students' needs.

- I am a reading specialist (Masters in Reading), have been a classroom teacher, and taught BSIP reading for 13 years. I have taken numerous workshops and am a member of the International Reading Association and its affiliates.
- Teaching reading in the elementary school quite thoroughly at the time ("79"). Former classroom teacher; college courses; workshops; inservices.
- None.
- I've had several "teaching reading" courses and many workshop sessions and courses on children's literature.
- Experience and a special education reading course I took.
- Local district inservice and some professional reading.

**Survey Question 14: What are your thoughts on adding a course in reading instruction as part of the required coursework for a degree or certification as a school library media specialist?**

- I had plenty of reading instruction courses as an undergraduate. Why add more?
- Should be required.
- I think this would be a very good idea! (This comment, phrased identically, was made by six respondents.)
- It is helpful to have some classroom experience but without extensive work (2 years or more) of day-to-day remedial work with reading, this is not especially helpful. One course is not enough.
- It should be mandatory. (This comment, phrased identically, was made by two respondents.)
- Probably a good idea. I don't feel I benefit from some of the other courses I took for my master's - that sounds practical.
- It might be beneficial, although in a typical day actual reading instruction doesn't fit into my schedule. (Our school library is only open three days per week.)
- Not necessary - School Library Media Specialists should have classroom background and related courses should have been part of the BA program.
- It does not hurt to have extra background.
- With the way our job is expanding, this is very important.
- Great! (This comment, phrased identically, was made by seven respondents.)
- It would depend on the content. Some teachers have a wealth of knowledge already. Perhaps as an elective.
- This was part of my program, but was very poorly taught and not of much benefit.
- It would be helpful.
- Excellent! (This comment, phrased identically, was made by three respondents.)

- Again, since I also majored in education and had reading courses, I believe they should be included. I never even really thought about them not being included. My background was always education oriented, although I did work in a public library as well.
- I had it at Rutgers in Children's Literature.
- It would be beneficial.
- I think it is a great idea to include it as required coursework. Many of your ideas work well when you have a true open media center which is available at all times for children and teachers to use.
- YES!
- I think it would be an asset to the degree program for those who haven't been required to take reading instruction courses.
- I think it is very important. It should be included.
- Worthwhile.
- Isn't this already required? It's required as regular NJ teaching certificate.
- Definitely!
- A must.
- Essential.
- Since theories change so, I feel such a course might limit a person's approach. Through years of experience, most of us become very eclectic using a "whatever works for this child" approach. Early on one tends to be more doctrinaire.
- Yes! In this day and age, we have more reading problems that are not being addressed as they should. During the 1960's and 70's, we did a "great" job.
- It certainly can't hurt.
- My goal is not to "teach" reading, rather to find the right "hook" to entice the reluctant reader and to expand the gifted child's range. Therefore, I feel it is more important to continually increase my knowledge of literature available.
- I'm all for it!
- Depends on your program.
- Reading instruction should be part of general teacher certification. The LMS needs to be aware of symptoms of problems, but is not responsible for teaching the process to students.
- A course based on various reading instructional techniques would be an excellent addition to the school library media specialist's program.
- Sounds helpful.
- Should be some type of instruction - otherwise, you're flying blind in trying to help your students.
- I don't think it is necessary if you keep yourself informed through reading journals, attending best book inservices, and articulating with other media specialists.
- Excellent idea! Montclair's program is much too focused on media, including outdated methods, such as film projectors.
- It would be helpful to understand the current reading processes used in the school systems.

- I think it's a good idea because it is necessary in an elementary school because it is helpful when helping students select material appropriate to their ability.
- As far as I know, reading instruction already is required coursework. It was at Kean in the 70's.
- That would be valuable.
- Hmm...many areas should be added, including a course in reading instruction.
- Excellent idea! Librarians should have this background even though they may rarely have the time to actually teach it.
- I believe it would be beneficial.
- I think it would be an asset to the program.
- Mixed feelings as book selection is only one part of my job, and research skills seem to take up so much of my class time.
- I think it is important.
- Great idea! Perhaps more necessary today than when I was in college 23 years ago.
- I think it's imperative that one does this.
- Needed.
- I would be for it. I currently run an enrichment reading group for advanced second and third graders and would like to do the same sort of group program for lower readers but would need more instruction for me to feel comfortable teaching it.
- Such a course could be very helpful, especially in understanding and appreciating what classroom teachers must do.
- In my setting, there is simply no time to "teach reading" in the library.
- Any good LMS must have some knowledge of the reading process. But, again, we really are not reading teachers.
- Definitely!
- It would be valuable.
- Very important and necessary, especially in dealing with multiple intelligences and different learning disabilities classifications.
- That would be an asset to the certification since the media specialist is the person who children will come to for advice on a book.
- Absolutely! I thought they were when I was an undergraduate. I have an elementary certificate, too.
- Probably - but eliminate the psyche counseling course which I found totally worthless but required at Montclair.

**Survey Question 18: How many years of classroom experience, if any, do you have?**

- Library media specialists in NJ are classroom teachers in elementary schools - we teach AND manage libraries. So what is your meaning of classroom experience?

- What does this add to library? I was trained as a school librarian and my PA certification recognized library as a teaching area. It is a shame that NJ certification does not recognize library as a teaching area.
- I ~~teach~~ 36 classes a week at 13 different grade levels.

**Additional Comments:**

- I would like to do many more things in our library, but I have a large school with large grade spread and regularly scheduled classes.
- One of the great pluses of a school library is that it can accommodate all levels of ability and interest.